



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 99.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE PHANTOM SOLDIER

OR
LITTLE SURE-SHOT'S LONE TRAIL



THE FLASH AND REPORT CAME TOGETHER, AND THE OUTLAW AT WHOM SURE-SHOT HAD AIMED SANK BACK IN A HEAP UPON THE GROUND.



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No. 99.

NEW YORK, April 4, 1903.

Price Five Cents.

Buffalo Bill and the Phantom Soldier;

OR,

LITTLE SURE SHOT'S LONE TRAIL.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE PHANTOM SOLDIER.

"I am looking for the dead!"

"Well, I am rather much alive, soldier pard, so you don't want me, I'm glad to say."

"No, not you—not you!"

"But, tell me, where are they?"

"Who?"

"The dead."

"In their graves, whar they oughter be."

"Won't yer take a seat in ther coach, pard, and go to the fort, fer it don't strike me yer head is just right; it's off ther trail o' reason?"

"Come, git in, and ther post surgeon will set yer on ther right trail."

"Are they there?"

"Who?"

"The dead."

"See here, pard, I hain't no spook hunter or comrade of stiffs; I'm flesh and bone, and you give me ther creepin' chills ter talk as yer does."

"I has a empty hearse, and you are welcome ter ride, so git in."

"No, no! I cannot—must not; I must find them."

The scene was on a trail in New Mexico, over which a stage-coach made a weekly run from Santa Fé to the mines and settlements on the way to the terminus at Fort Comanche.

The driver, Nate Nixon, was on his way to the fort when he discovered, at a point where the trail was very rough, a man standing in his way, as though to bring him to a halt.

Nate Nixon was utterly fearless, and drove a deadly trail, for he had both Indians and outlaws to waylay him; yet he had no dread of the one he saw ahead in the trail, for he wore the uniform of a cavalryman in the United States Army.

"Some courier whose horse has given out," inferred Nate.

As he drew near, the soldier suddenly rallied from the dejected mood in which he had, seemingly, been plunged, brought his carbine up, and, in a threatening manner, called out:

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

The driver had intended to halt, but the words and looks of the man quickened that intention. He drew up at once, and riveted his eyes scrutinizingly upon the man who barred his way, while he muttered:

"Ef he hain't got 'em, then I'm sweetly lying. He's as crazy as a jack rabbit."

Nixon saw a man of fine proportions, dressed in a tattered uniform, with a face almost concealed by a long, heavy beard, and hair that hung upon his shoulders.

His face was darkly bronzed by exposure, but his eyes were bright and very piercing.

"Well, pard, I've halted; what does you want?" and Nate put his hand upon his revolver, lying on the seat by his side, now confident that he had a madman to deal with.

In answer, the soldier passed his hand wearily across his forehead, as though to clear his brain, and made the startling reply:

"I am looking for the dead."

Feeling a pity for the man, of whose madness he was now assured, and, wishing to have him properly cared for, the driver said, in a kindly tone:

"I guess you'll find them you is looking for at Fort Comanche, pard, and I——"

Nate stopped suddenly, for his words seemed to excite the man terribly. He started as though the driver had fired upon him, instead of having spoken kindly.

His face became livid, and he suddenly shouted:

"Fort Comanche! Fort Comanche! My God! not there, not there!"

Startled himself at the effect on the man which the name of the fort had produced, Nixon firmly grasped his weapon, loath to fire upon a madman, but expecting a violent attack, and determined to act in self-defense.

But the soldier, as soon as he had uttered his words, turned, and, with great bounds, went toward the timber on one side of the trail, and the next moment had leaped upon the back of a fine horse, which Nate saw waiting for him, and in another moment was flying away at a breakneck speed.

"Well! that about took ther narve out o' me, I'm free ter admit."

"Now, who on 'arth is he, fer I hain't heerd o' no lunatic asylum in these parts fer him ter git out of?"

"Why, I'd ruther be held up by road agents than meet him again, 'fore ther Lord, I would! I don't believe he's flesh and blood, arter all. I think he's a ghost o' some dead soldier."

"Come, hosses, you must git along lively, fer he may take a notion ter come back," and Nate drove swiftly on his way.

CHAPTER II.

PUT TO FLIGHT.

Nate Nixon was not a man to flinch at any danger. Scores of times he had proven that. His very driving of that long and perilous trail attested his dauntless nerve, for none but a man of extremest bravery would dare that duty. But he had a superstitious dread of what he was pleased to call "spooks," and looked with awe upon any one who had lost their sanity.

As he drove on, and briskly, he kept his head half turned, his eyes glancing back to see if the phantom soldier was pursuing him, still "looking for the dead."

So intent was he in gazing behind that he did not keep a weather eye out ahead; therefore did not see three men quickly step out into the trail ahead.

Two of the three had rifles; the third only had revolvers.

All were masked, and, while those with the rifles stood on either side of the trail, with weapons ready, the third quietly waited in the center of the track.

That was the group Nate Nixon noted when he again turned his gaze ahead, after a long look behind, the longer because he had heard a shout far back in the rear, he was certain. It might have been the cry of a panther, or the yowl of a hungry wolf, but Nate was certain that he was nearer right in deciding that it was a human voice.

But nothing appeared back on the trail; he was alone; yet, not alone, for there were the three masked men ahead, to meet his vision when he again looked in that direction.

He did not wait for a command to halt; no need for that; the attitude of the three was command enough; they were of the "Hands-up!" brigade, he saw at a glance.

Nixon knew that he carried a lot of money, greenbacks, which he was bearing back to San Gabriel in return for gold sent in by the miners.

He had always prided himself upon his luck of having lost little by the hands-up toll-takers, but now it looked very much as if he would pay big toll to make up for past good luck.

So he pulled his teams to a halt, and called out:

"Well, what's up?"

"You carry money, and plenty of it, Nate Nixon," answered the one who appeared to be the leader.

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"I don't take your word fer it."

"Come; no nonsense, for I happen to know that you are well fixed this trip."

"That I is—very well fixed; an' if yer don't think so, jist look inside ther hearse and see ther soldiers that hes got you covered."

With bounds like deer, the three road raiders sprang to

the shelter of the timber, while Nate Nixon dexterously gave his whip a swing, and the teams sprang forward with frightened alacrity.

But the three men, not being fired upon as they had expected, sent two rifle shots after the daring driver, who crouched below the seat and drove on, one of the bullets tearing along the top of the coach, the other shattering one of the lamps to atoms.

The robbers, however, unfortunately for Nate, had their horses near, and within a minute all three were in hot pursuit.

Still Nixon was not one to halt when he realized that they were gaining, and the odds all against him. Not a halt! He coolly lifted the rifle which he always had on the deck behind him, ready for emergencies, and, taking aim as best he could, with the coach swaying wildly, he pulled the trigger.

A wild yell broke from his lips as he saw the man at whom he had aimed tumble headlong from his saddle.

But, not dismayed, the other two urged their horses on the faster, and, as Nate Nixon had to guide his now flying team just then, from the nature of the trail, he dared not use his revolvers, and found himself covered by one on each side, as the two men dashed up beside the coach.

"I don't wish to kill you, Nixon, but I will if you do not halt, and that quickly."

"You is very kind, and, as I has about played my last trump, I'll do as you say."

His foot pressed hard on the brake; he drew in his horses, and the coach came to a standstill, while Nate said, with a sneer:

"Ther soldier bluff scared yer bad; but, just look inter ther hearse and see what's thar."

He was playing another game to get a chance to use his revolver, and his words made the leader and his remaining man cautious.

They did not know but what they might be caught in some kind of a trap.

To add to their fears, there came to their hearing the rapid clatter of hoofs back on the trail, and in a moment more a commanding voice shouted:

"Follow me, men! Charge!"

The two road agents saw a mounted soldier dash into view, his saber in hand! Again they were scared from their prey, and deep into their horses' flanks they drove their spurs in rapid flight, disappearing over a ridge just as Nate Nixon saw sweep by him the mad soldier!

CHAPTER III.

THE BUCKSKIN BRAVO.

"Well, I'll be blamed!"

Such was the emphatic exclamation of Nate Nixon as he beheld the mad soldier, whom he had feared even

more than he had the road raiders, fly by him at full speed.

The phantom, or man, whichever he was, was standing up in his stirrups, slashing right and left with his saber at imaginary foes, and did not even appear to see the coach and the much astonished driver.

The mad rider looked straight ahead, as his splendid horse bounded along at terrific speed; from his lips broke commanding orders to an imaginary regiment of cavalry, and, paying no heed that the two road agents had gone away to the right in rapid flight, he swept on up the trail and disappeared from sight.

When he had first heard the voice of the mad soldier, had seen him dash into view, Nate Nixon believed that a scouting party of cavalry had come to his rescue.

The next instant had revealed the truth.

As the mad horseman dashed out of sight up the trail, Nate Nixon uttered again the expression that gave vent to his feelings:

"Well, I'll be blamed!"

He made no immediate effort to go on, but sat on his box, looking up the trail.

The road agents might still return.

So might the mad soldier.

And Nate Nixon dreaded the latter the most, even though his coming had frightened off his foes.

At last, he seemed to realize that he must act, and he gathered up his reins.

Glancing back over the trail, he saw the body of the dead outlaw whom he had shot from his saddle.

He lay just at the bend of the trail, several hundred yards back.

"I guess I'd better pick up my game, or ther boys won't think I has been gunning for folks," he muttered.

With this, as he could not turn his coach just there, he dismounted from his box, reloaded his rifle, slung it at his back, and tramped back to where the body lay.

Stooping, he raised the mask.

"Waal, I declar'!

"It's one of them fellers I has seen at San Gabriel, one of Fandango Fred's gang.

"It'll surprise the boys when they sees him."

With this, he shouldered the body, and, hastening back to the coach, put it inside, and, mounting, was starting upon his way, when he again heard hoofs approaching.

"I hope it hain't that mad soldier, who's made another turn and got behind me."

"But he's liable to do anything," muttered Nate.

Then, as his keen ears told him there was but one horse coming, he said:

"I guess I hain't afeered ter tackle one, if it hain't that crazy cavalryman."

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

Another moment there dashed into view a horse and rider, coming along at a swinging pace.

Nate Nixon had seen him the moment he appeared, and he cried, in a tone of exultation:

"Sure Shot, as sure as I lives.

"My! how quick he seen thet disturbance in ther trail whar ther outlaw tuk a tumble.

"Well, I'm right glad of his comp'ny, and no mistake."

The next moment the one whom he had called Sure Shot, the Buckskin Brave, reined up alongside of the coach and called out:

"Ho, Nate! what's gone wrong with you?"

It was a boy, or, rather, a youth of sixteen or thereabout.

He was rather small for his age, but of a hardy, sinewy form, and he was dressed in a cavalry fatigue uniform, without any insignia of rank.

He was clad in buckskin, wore top boots and a wide sombrero, and looked like a dashing young cavalryman.

His face was a striking one, so handsome was it, so fearless and determined for one of his years, and the hue to which it was bronzed showed that he had passed his life out of doors.

The horse that he rode was a spirited one, equipped with a Texas saddle and bridle, and his weapons were a saber, revolvers, rifle, and lariat, with a blanket and camping outfit, as though he was on a long trail.

In answer to his questions, Nate Nixon said: "I'm glad yer has come, Little Sure Shot, for with road agents and a mad soldier, I'm all tuk aback!"

"You've got the material for a funeral in the old hearse, I see."

"Yes, I kilt him."

"Road agent?"

"Yes; one of three that held me up, and was run off by a mad soldier."

"A mad soldier?"

"Yes; does yer know of any crazy cavalryman escaped from the fort?"

"There was no crazy cavalryman there to escape, Nate."

"Well, ther one I seen is dead crazy, an' gittin' more so."

CHAPTER IV.

A SURPRISE.

At the words of Nate Nixon, the youth laughed a merry, boyish laugh, and replied:

"Any wheels in your head, Nate, for there is no soldier missing from the fort?"

"Nary a wheel."

"I'm all right in ther head; but I tell yer I seen a mad

soldier, as halted me, and was a-lookin' fer dead men, he told me."

"Who was he?"

"A mad soldier."

"Did he rob you?"

"Now, Little Sure Shot, don't you know Nate Nixon hain't ther man ter pan out unless odds is agin' him?"

"I know your record, Nate; but it must have been a road agent playing soldier to get up close to you."

"No, he wa'n't no road agent."

"What did he want, then?"

"He were lookin' fer dead folks, he told me, and then rid off when I tolle him I didn't have any stiffs on tap jest then."

"But I c'u'd supply him now with one, and a dead agent to boot."

"And the road agents attacked you after the mad soldier left?"

"Yes."

"They were in league with him."

"No, they warn't, Little Sure Shot, for he were as crazy as a jack rabbit in a prairie fire."

"Tell me all about it, Nate."

"I'll do it."

And Nate Nixon told his story just as it had happened, the boy listening with great attention.

"And he did not speak to you as he went by?"

"No, he didn't."

"He were thet busy commandin' a reegement of cavalry he were leading, in his mind, thet he didn't see me; he looked right ahead, but went along at a full run, carving off heads and arms, first on one side, then on t'other, until he got out of sight."

"I tell yer, it were awful, Sure Shot."

"But his coming stamped the road agents?"

"You bet he did, and ef they'd hev stopped ter git better acquainted, they'd hev been scared ter death."

"Thar's ther horse now of ther one I kilt, runnin' loose."

"I'll just take him in out of the wet," and the youth dashed off after the horse, swung his lariat, and skillfully caught the animal, leading him back to the coach, with the remark:

"He's yours, Nate, and a good one."

"Thank yer, pard, but we'll go shares on him."

"I'll just fasten him to one of my leaders."

"No, Nate; I have no claim on him, and I only came after you because the sutler at the fort told me you carried big money for San Gabriel, and I was afraid you might be held up."

"I looked for Buffalo Bill to come along, too, but he's been off for a couple of days, the scouts said, so I came

alone, and I am glad I did, for, though I did no good, I'll continue on to San Gabriel with you."

"I'm mighty glad to have yer, Little Sure Shot, fer I knows what you is worth in trouble."

"Maybe we'll meet your mad soldier again, Nate."

"I just hopes not, fer I hain't stuck on seeing him no more, not a little bit."

The boy laughed, and replied:

"Well, drive on, and I'll follow within earshot behind, to be on hand should you need aid."

"I'll lead the outlaw's horse, too, for the sound of more hoofstrokes will have an effect if you get into trouble, and they hear me coming."

"All right." And, tossing the rein of the riderless horse to Little Sure Shot, Nate Nixon mounted his box and drove on once more.

The youth waited until he had gotten a quarter of a mile ahead, and then rode on, leading the outlaw's horse by the stake rope.

For several miles Nate Nixon went briskly along, and there being no further appearance of the road agents or the mad soldier, he was beginning to congratulate himself that he would reach San Gabriel with his treasure in safety.

Drawing rein in a small stream to water his horses, he remarked to himself, as he had a score of times before, that that was the very place for a hold-up of the coach by outlaws, and yet none of them had ever happened to select the spot for their lawless work.

The trail led down from the range by a winding way, and there ascended the hills on the other side by the same steep and circuitous kind of path.

The valley was narrow, heavily wooded, dotted with large boulders, and was a dark-looking spot even at noonday.

"Your horses are thirsty, Nate, but don't hurry them, for we have plenty of time."

The words fell like a death-knell upon the ears of Nate Nixon.

At last the outlaws had selected the spot he had dreaded, and were there to bar his way.

He looked up quickly at the sound of the voice, and beheld several rifles peering at him over a rock on a level with the top of the coach, and masked faces were peering along the sights of the leveled rifles.

knew that he held the winning hand, and would take his time, fearing no resistance or rescue.

Then Nate's thoughts were of the youth, whom he knew was following.

Would not he come up and run into a deadly trap, instead of aiding him?

How could he warn him? he wondered.

A quick glance revealed to him three rifles peering over the rocks, and the one who had spoken was on the other side of the trail.

If these were all, four of them, that would be big odds against himself and the boy.

So Nate decided to do the only thing he could, talk loud, and give the youth warning of his mishap, so that he could avoid running into the trap.

"And who ther devil is you, that takes sich an interest in my hosses?" said Nate, in a loud tone, he meant should be heard back on the trail.

"Ah, you don't know, eh?

"Well, I'll introduce myself, and you'll know me better when we have you."

"I am Diablo Dick, once of San Gabriel, but now of the road, finding it more profitable to get gold with the aid of a revolver than to work hard for it with shovel and pick."

"I've got more men now than I had half a dozen miles back on the trail, when that crazy fool in uniform scared us off, and this time I shall get the big boodle I know you have along."

"Think so?" shouted Nate, raising his voice to its highest pitch.

"Say, I'm not deaf, Nate; so you need not shout at me so."

"I wants yer ter understand me."

"I do, and you must understand me."

"I want no nonsense, and will have none."

"I like you, Nate Nixon, and don't wish to kill you, but I'll do it if you force me to do so."

"What fer? What has I done to harm you?"

"Nothing, only hand out that boodle if you value your life!"

"Yer is away off, for I didn't get any."

"I know that to be a lie."

"I know that you carry a good sum in greenbacks, and I'll stand no more trifling, so hand it out."

"Come get it." And Nate reached under the seat for something.

"Don't be a fool, if you intend to use a gun."

"I hain't no fool."

"I says, come git ther boodle, for I knows when ther game goes dead agin' me."

"One of you men go and get that box," ordered the chief of the outlaws.

CHAPTER V.

A CRACK SHOT.

Nate Nixon was painfully surprised at the words of the outlaw and the sight of the rifles covering him.

His first thought of resistance he saw would be madness, and the cool remarks of the outlaw showed that he

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

Nate saw that one of the three rifles was withdrawn, and this showed him that there were but three men besides the leader.

A moment after the man appeared in the trail, walking down toward the stream in which the horses still stood.

He was masked, and dressed in frontier garb.

"Drive up here, fer I hain't goin' ter wade in ther water fer ther boodle," called out the man.

Nate seized his reins, started up his team, and drove to a halting place near the man.

Then he again took the box, and said:

"Now yer gits it, and I don't want no more talk, for I'm behind time now."

The man held up both hands to get the box, when suddenly from across the valley there came a shot, and he dropped forward on his face, almost under the wheels of the coach.

The shot was a surprise to Nate, as well as the outlaws, who at once sprang out of sight in the dense timber about them, while at the same instant the sound of hoofs was heard coming down the trail behind them.

"Mount and ride for your lives, men! We are hemmed in!"

"I'll even up for this another day, Nate Nixon," shouted the outlaw leader, and there was heard following his words rapid riding through the timber.

A moment after there appeared coming across the valley Little Sure Shot, rifle in hand, and leading his two horses, while he called out:

"It was a long-range shot, Nate, but I got him."

"Yes, yer got him dead sure, but look out, fer somebody's coming down ther trail ahead of me, a-ridin' like mad," and Nate seized his rifle ready to greet whoever it should be.

CHAPTER VI.

BUFFALO BILL.

The first thought of Nate Nixon was that the newcomer was the mad soldier.

Who else but a madman would ride at that breakneck speed down that steep and rocky trail?

Whoever it was had doubtless heard the shot fired by the youth, and was either a rescuer coming to aid the coach or another outlaw.

The road-agents had taken the idea that he was a foe, and fled, leaving the body of their dead comrade lying by the coach wheels.

The youth heard the sound of the hoofs and stood by his horses, his rifle, hastily reloaded, in his hand.

And he, too, looked for it to be Nate's mad soldier.

Louder and louder resounded the hoofs, as nearer and nearer came the horse, and seated upon his box, rifle in

hand, Nate Nixon awaited for the man to dash into view.

Across the stream stood Little Sure Shot, also waiting, and if a foe, the horseman would meet a warm reception.

"It's thet spooky, mad soldier, blame him," muttered Nate.

Hardly had he uttered the words when the horseman dashed into view around a curve of the trail. It was not the mad soldier.

But it was some one whom both Nate Nixon and Little Sure Shot recognized, as an exultant shout broke from the lips of both.

The man who dared dash at such a mad pace down that rugged trail held his reins firmly in his left hand, sat upright in his saddle, and with his right hand grasped his revolver.

He was ready for action.

And a splendid looking pair were horse and rider, the former jet black, large, and with points denoting the racer and powers of great endurance.

The rider was a man whom the whole world now knows as Buffalo Bill, though at that time he was making history for himself and the far frontier, building up by his daring deeds the record that has since made his name so renowned.

He halted suddenly by the side of the coach, gave a quick glance at the dead outlaw, and then said, in a quiet manner, natural to him:

"Been in trouble, I see, Nate."

"Yes, Mr. Cody, but between the boy and yourself I came out O. K."

"The boy?"

"Ah! I see him now watering his horses."

"Ho, Sure Shot, glad to see you," called out the great scout, with a wave of his hand to the youth, who now rode up on his horse, leading the animal of the dead outlaw.

"And mighty glad am I to see you, Mr. Cody, for I was wishing for you only a little while ago," and Sure Shot spurred alongside the scout and grasped his hand in a way that showed that he had the warmest friendship for him.

"You've had deadly work here, I see."

"I heard a shot when I was up on the ridge, and supposed that you were in trouble, Nate, so came to the rescue."

"That was not all?" and he pointed to the dead outlaw.

"Oh, no, I've got another inside ther hearse, and three of 'em got away, when Sure Shot dropped this one, and they heerd you coming down ther trail."

"We've had a right lively time of it, Mr. Cody, as I'll tell yer about," and Nate Nixon went on to tell his experience of the last two hours.

Buffalo Bill had dismounted and looked at the masked outlaw, and then at the one inside the coach.

Then he put the last one killed also into the coach, with the remark:

"That was a fine shot, boy pard, and just like you.

"But I don't just understand about this mad soldier you tell me of, Nate."

"I don't understand about him myself."

"Tell me just where you last saw him and I will go and pick up his trail, that is, as soon as I track the three outlaws who attacked you here."

"You will find three of 'em, yer know."

"All right, and be careful to look out fer them, but I wish to see just where they go."

"And the leader says he is Diablo Dick, ther Desperado of San Gabriel."

"He lies!"

"Diablo Dick would not be guilty of such an act, if he was a man-killer."

"No, he is not Diablo Dick, but is using his name," and Little Sure Shot spoke with a vehemence that surprised Nate Nixon, while Buffalo Bill said:

"That's right, Sure Shot, stick up for your old pard, for I, too, can hardly believe it was Diablo Dick."

"But that is to be found out, as well as who this mad soldier is, and I'll take the trail at once."

"And I'm with you."

"No, boy pard, you go on with Nate here, and wait in San Gabriel for me, for I'm on a trail I wish your help in."

"Good-by." And, going into the timber, Buffalo Bill picked up the trail of the three outlaws and started off on it down the valley.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NAME ON THE SADDLE.

"Well, I feel better, Sure Shot, now Buffalo Bill is between me and them outlaws, for it's a mighty ticklish thing ter hev as much money along as I hev."

So said Nate Nixon when the scout had ridden off on the trail of the outlaws.

"Yes, and when I saw you handing out the money box to them, my heart was in my mouth, for fear if I did kill that fellow who was reaching for it, the others would get off with the boodle."

"Sure Shot, let me tell you somethin'."

"Well, Nate?"

"I hain't sich a fool as I looks."

"It would be a fool only who would accuse you of being one, Nate."

"Yer know, I has ter keep my wits up, and I has grit right smart, I kin tell yer."

"Yer see, ther hain't ther money box which I was handin' out."

"No?"

"It hain't."

"It's just like it."

"Sure, fer ther are part of my game."

"I hed it made so, and I has in it a lot of packages of green-painted paper, in imitation money, I got from a party as was advertising some kind o' lottery."

"These is all divided inter packages, and a paper pasted around each one with ther amount of money marked on it."

"Yer see, they is then tied up together, and wedged in ther box, and it w'u'd take a bank clerk ter know they wasn't nice new money, unless they was broke apart and examined."

"Now, ef they broke ther locks and looked in ter ther box, ther outlaws w'u'd swear they hed got boodle; but they don't take ther time ter investigate, and so I was handin' out ther bogus money, while ther 'tother box are restin' up thar in a little hidin' place under ther seat."

"While they war happy at gittin' ther snide money, I'd hev been liftin' things fer San Gabriel."

"It would have been a splendid trick on them, Nate; but they would have killed you for it next time they caught you."

"I'd hev saved ther boodle, boy pard, anyhow, and have had to take ther chances o' gittin' kilt next time."

"You're a dandy, Nate; but now I'm going to look up ther dead man's horse, for these fellows were in too big a hurry to take him with them."

"Thet's right."

"Yer find him, and we hes a horse apiece fer our trouble, and good animals they is."

"Well, I'll hitch this horse on behind, and you drive on, for, whether I get the horse or not, I'll soon overtake you, and then I'm going to tell you what I intend doing."

"What is it?"

"I'll tell you soon," and, mounting his horse, the boy rode into the timber in search of the horse of the outlaw whom he had killed.

He did not have a long search, for the horse was found, hitched to a tree not far away, and he seemed to have been apart from the other animals of the outlaws.

The tracks of the others showed the three together, and their saddle and outfit were like that of the animal then following behind the coach, while the horse just found was a fine one, and his whole equipments were of a much better kind than the others.

"Ah, I have it!"

"This was the horse of the outlaw leader, and, being hitched so far away, he ran to the first animal he could reach, mounted, and made his escape."

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"This is a mighty fine saddle, and—what is this?

"Why, here is the name of Diablo Dick engraved on the horn, and—~~out~~, no, I will not yet believe that it is my old pard, who has turned road agent.

"Diablo Dick, I admit, was a man who had a bad name in San Gabriel, and he had a record as a man-killer; but he had a great big heart, was a devoted friend to me, and if he did run off from Buffalo Bill after the fight with the Comanches, it was because he did not wish the scout to arrest him for some crime he was accused of.

"Yes, he ran off then, and in the six months that have passed since then I have not heard of him, until now this masked road agent chief comes up and claims to be Diablo Dick.

"But I'll have to see him as I know him, to be convinced."

So musing, Little Sure Shot mounted his horse, and, with the animal in lead, started on after the coach.

He overtook it after an hour's ride, for Nate Nixon was driving rapidly to make up for lost time, and he called out for the driver to halt.

"Nate, here is the horse, and it is the chief's without a doubt.

"You see the name of Diablo Dick here on the saddle, but that does not prove anything to me against my pard.

"Now, Nate, take him to San Gabriel, and ask Tom Totten to keep the horse and outfit for me, for I'm going back to follow the trail of Buffalo Bill, for that is what I was going to tell you," and Little Sure Shot spoke in a decided way, that showed his mind was made up on that point.

CHAPTER VIII.

SURE SHOT'S LONE TRAIL.

Nate Nixon seemed to regret the decision of the youth, that he would go on the trail of Buffalo Bill, and to urge against it, said:

"He has got two hours' lead of you now, boy pard, and night hain't so very far off, while he said yer was ter meet him in San Gabriel, yer know."

"Yes, I know."

"An' then, maybe yer can't find his trail, and—"

"I wasn't a captive for several years among the Comanches, Nate, not to learn how to follow a trail, and I can stick to Buffalo Bill's, if he stuck to the trail of the outlaws."

"Yes, I'm going back, for you are in no danger now, I feel certain."

"So does I, only I doesn't want ter see yer go, boy pard."

"Well, I feel that it is my duty."

"Did you ever feel a presentiment of evil, Nate?"

"I guess I have."

"Well, I have a dread of evil now."

"I felt it come upon me the moment I saw Buffalo Bill ride away alone, and I determined to follow him."

"He is about as able to take care of himself as any man I know, but, then, he may be in trouble, and I'll feel better when I go to see."

"I'm fitted out with food and ammunition for two days, anyhow."

"Now, I'm off," and, with a wave of the hand, the brave boy started back on the stage trail, riding in a rapid gallop, to go in search of Buffalo Bill, who, he had a dread, might have fallen into some great trouble.

Nate Nixon looked after the youth for a moment, and then muttered to himself:

"I don't just know what ter make of that kid."

"He are full white, fer he's ther colonel's son; but he do know as much about Injuns as they does themselves, and he don't scare at nothing."

"When he ween a nobody at San Gabriel, only knowed as the Boy Highflyer, afore Buffalo Bill found out who he was, I tuk kindly to him, and what he hes done fer me terday makes him closer to me, and no mistake."

"Wall, I must git along, but I does pray that Pard Providence they tells me sits up aloft will take keer o' ther kid; yes, and Buffalo Bill, too, and they kin set this prayer down as coming from my heart."

And so brave, noble-hearted Nate Nixon sent his team rapidly along toward San Gabriel, his thoughts busy with the adventures through which he had just passed.

In the meanwhile, Little Sure Shot had reached the brook in the little valley, gone to the spot where the horses of the road agents had been hitched and from where their trail led off down the valley.

There were the tracks of four different horses, the fourth being that of Buffalo Bill's big black, and the youth read the signs as cleverly as an Indian could have done, and followed the trail even more rapidly.

The valley narrowed after a few miles into a canyon, and there the stream spread over it, and, of course, the trails were obliterated.

But, passing through the canyon there was a plateau of large extent, heavily timbered, and the boy at once began to search for the trails.

They were soon found, and the tracks showed that the horses were no longer at a run when they had passed there; at least, three of them were not.

But the black of the scout showed that he was at full gallop.

And Sure Shot kept his horse also at a rapid pace.

After going a short distance, the trails bore to the left, and toward the foothills of the range, along which the stage trail ran, and Little Sure Shot felt certain that the

band must have a retreat somewhere in the mountains, and that Buffalo Bill would track them to it.

That they had not anticipated pursuit, when not immediately pursued from the stage-coach, the trail showed, the horses of the outlaws going in a walk.

But the black had still been going at a gallop.

Presently the boy halted.

Something in the trail had caught his eye.

The tracks showed that the three outlaws' horses had been started off again, as though startled, and had been put to a full run.

The youth turned and glanced about him.

"Yes, they saw Buffalo Bill from here, for they could see back a mile over their trail, and they started at full speed.

"And the black was going at a clipping pace, too, when he passed along here.

"Yes, and I'll do the same, for night is near at hand.

"Come, old horse, it strikes me there is work ahead for me to do, and yet here is night almost upon us."

Dashing swiftly on for a couple of miles, the youth was compelled to look about for a camp, for night was closing in, and he could no longer see the trail.

But just as he halted he saw, far ahead, the glimmer of a camp-fire.

He at once continued on, for he had found now a beacon to guide him through the darkness.

He knew that there was no miner's cabin in that region, no lone ranch, and it must be the outlaws, the scout, or a band of Indians.

Approaching as near as he dared on horseback, he dismounted and on foot made his way closer and closer to the fire.

He even gained a position where he could see the little camp, and beheld three men seated about the fire.

But he saw a fourth also, and his heart almost stood still as he beheld the form of Buffalo Bill lying prone upon the ground, as though the scout was dead.

"My God! have they killed Buffalo Bill?" and with the words Little Sure Shot grasped his rifle firmly and crept still nearer to the camp.

CHAPTER IX.

AT SAN GABRIEL.

Nate Nixon did not arrive in San Gabriel until a couple of hours after dark.

He was always so promptly on time that a great deal of uneasiness was being manifested by the miners and others that made up the settlement of San Gabriel, for it had leaked out that he was to bring back a large sum in paper money.

When two hours had passed and the coach did not ap-

pear, Tom Totten, a good, all-around fellow, and the "big bug" of San Gabriel, called for a party to go with him to make a search for the coach.

Tom Totten was the proprietor of the Win and Lose Saloon, and held a controlling interest in the inn, a gambling saloon, and a store.

Then he was captain of the Rangers, the home guard of San Gabriel, a frontier New Mexican settlement that could boast of as many hard citizens as other border camps with a much larger population.

Before the Rangers could mount, however, Nate Nixon's stage-horn was heard in the distance, and a wild cheer went up.

There were bets whether Nate had been held up or not, whether he had lost his money or saved it, and if it had or had not been an accident, a breakdown that had detained him.

Only a few months before San Gabriel had been visited by an Indian raid that would have been most disastrous to the place and its every interest had it not been for a warning given by Buffalo Bill to the waif of the camp known as Little Sure Shot, the Highflyer.

Since then, though, the Indians had given little trouble, the camp stood in awe of them, while the road agents had become most to be feared, and had gotten some rich hauls from the coaches, Nate Nixon having been the only driver who had escaped them.

Now it would be seen if his good luck had stuck to him in this run.

The sound of the wheels was soon heard, and all knew that Nate was driving more rapidly than was his wont.

A few moments more and the coach dashed up to the door of the inn, while a great shout of welcome greeted it.

"Thanks, pard, thanks." And Nate tossed his reins down, raised his hat politely, and then swung himself down from the box.

He faced the crowd, and all was a dead silence until Tom Totten said:

"We were just going to look you up, Nate.

"What was wrong?"

"Road agents."

"Ah!" And a groan went up from the crowd, for many had money at stake.

"Then you were robbed?"

"No, I wasn't."

"You beat them off?"

"Thar is two dead stiffs in the hearse, thet you kin look at and see ef yer recognize them."

The doors of the coach were thrown open and the dead bodies of the outlaws pulled out and dragged into the bright light of the Win and Lose.

The masks were torn off and a shout went up, and a chorus of voices spoke two names.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

The dead outlaws were recognized as two men who were not down on the Black List as "bad men from Bitter Creek."

In fact, they were supposed to be honest men.

"I hes ther horses along, and each hed a belt pretty well loaded with boodle," said Nate.

"You are lucky.

"But how did you do it, Nate, and save your money, too?" asked Tom Totten.

"I didn't do it all, fer I had help."

"Who?"

"Ther Boy Highflyer, who used ter live here, afore he were discovered ter be ther longlost son of Colonel Far-rar of Fort Comanche."

"Good! The boy is a dandy for chipping in when help is needed," Tom Totten remarked.

"I hed more help, too."

"Who?"

"Buffalo Bill."

A cheer arose at the name, and all crowded more eagerly around Nate Nixon, for each one felt that the driver had an interesting story to tell.

"Tell us about it, Nate," said Tom Totten, eagerly.

"As soon as I has got ther dust out of my throat, so as I kin talk, I will."

Tom Totten took the hint, and a glass of "the best" was set before the driver, who dashed it off with the air of a man who enjoyed it.

Then, in his quaint way, Nate said:

"I'll tell yer ther story, pards, but let me do it in my own way, and then yer kin catechize me much as yer like, fer I'll answer all questions.

"Yer money is safe, and, save ther old coach got a little scraping with a bullet or two, no harm were done our side, and I has two dead men and ther horses and outfit ter show.

"Ef it hedn't been fer ther kid, Little Sure Shot, and Buffalo Bill, maybe you'd hev hed ter find ther story out, bein' as I wouldn't hev been here ter help yer.

"Now, ef I is axed a question afore I gits to ther end of my trail I shuts up—so here goes, fer yer knows what ter expect."

CHAPTER X.

THE DRIVER'S STORY TOLD.

The story of Nate Nixon was listened to with the deepest interest by one and all.

Not a soul dared interrupt him, for they knew if they did he would shut up as close as a clam, while he was willing to answer any questions after he had had his say.

Of his own deeds, he spoke most modestly, took no

credit for his having risked his life in dashing away from the outlaws or having killed one.

But of Little Sure Shot he spoke in the highest praise.

He told how the boy had left the fort alone, after the sutler had informed him that he, Nate Nixon, was carrying thousands of dollars in greenbacks, and he had followed to protect the coach.

Of the boy's long-range, crack shot with his rifle, Nate also told with enthusiasm, but did not consider that it was right to state that the box he was handing out was but a decoy, and not the one containing the money.

Nate knew his crowd, and did not doubt but that some one of the outlaw band might be in the saloon then, listening to him.

Then he told of Buffalo Bill's ride down the steep trail at breakneck speed, and that he had gone off on the trail of the road agents, who had taken to flight at his coming, and the shot of the youth, which had been fatal to one of their number.

"Now, pards, yer has my story as it were, and I wants ter ask yer who thet mad soldier is."

"Never heard of him, Nate," said Tom Totten.

This was the general response, for not one in San Gabriel seemed to know anything about the mad soldier.

"Now, pards, I is open ter questioning, when I says that Sure Shot and Buffalo Bill desarves ther thanks of this layout."

This was the general opinion, and Tom Totten set up drinks for the crowd at his expense, and the health of the scout and the youth was drunk with a cheer.

"Now, tell us what thet kid are doin' out here, anyhow, since his daddy hev claimed him?" asked a voice, and the question seemed to grate somewhat harshly on the ears of all.

As for Nate, he simply "spotted" the questioner as one he intended to keep an eye on, but answered quickly.

"Ther boy is at ther fort, studyin' lessons, I hev heerd, larnin' ter be a soldier, and scouting around with Buffalo Bill.

"When his father goes East, as he is ter do, I has heerd, in a few months, ther boy will go, too, and try ter enter ther Military Academy, ter be a officer, and a dandy one he'll make."

"Ef he don't git his chips called in afore he goes on ther hunt fer epaulets," said the same speaker, and Nate saw that he was a surly miner by the name of Nat Farley, a man who was generally feared as possessing an ugly disposition, ever ready to pick a quarrel.

"He'll take his chances of bein' kilt, as any man does, and if he hes ter go, few men will meet death as thet boy will," said Nate, rather hotly, and, seeing a breeze stirring, Tom Totten asked:

"Well, Nate, what I wish to know is about that mad soldier."

"Did not Buffalo Bill or the young highflyer know whether any soldier had gone mad and escaped?"

"They said not."

"And how many outlaws did you see?"

"Three ther fust time, and I kilt one, leavin' two."

"Ther next time ther' was four, and two of 'em was ther ones as fu'st held me up, and he got hold of a couple more pards."

"It were ther same man as was chief, and did ther talkin' all along, and who do yer think he said he were?" And Nate turned so as to keep his eye on Miner Nat Farley when he should mention the name of the road agent leader.

"Who, Nate?" asked Tom Totten, and every ear was anxious to catch the name.

"Why, Diablo Dick."

A loud murmur went the rounds of the crowd.

"Diablo Dick, the Desperado?"

"The worst man in San Gabriel."

"A man-killer from 'wayback."

"The man who kilt folks on account o' bullyin' ther boy, the highflyer."

"And made ther boy his pard fer life."

"Yes, Diablo Dick, who skipped the camp, I heered, ter keep Buffalo Bill from arrestin' him fer some crime he had done."

"Well, Nate, it may be Diablo Dick, if he said so, and yet I never considered him a bad man, save that he was awful ready with his gun; but, then, he never took any advantage, and, as I remember, those whose chips he called in were, as we all know, the worst characters in the camps."

"You are right, Pard Totten, he warn't a half-bad man, and yet ther road agent chief said he were Diablo Dick."

"It is a wonder you escaped then, if he has turned outlaw, for he knows no fear; but we will soon know, if Buffalo Bill and Little Sure Shot are on the trail of the road agents."

"Thet don't mean that they'll git 'em," growled Nat Farley, and Nate Nixon did not allow the remark of the miner to escape him.

CHAPTER XI.

SURE SHOT ON HIS METTLE.

The sight that he beheld about the little camp-fire on the creek banks was startling to Little Sure Shot.

Instantly there swept before him the dread of evil he had had come over him.

He recalled his fear that Buffalo Bill was in trouble, and needed him.

But had he come too late?

Was the great scout cold in death?

He lay motionless, and to the boy it seemed that he was dead.

Somehow, he had never connected Buffalo Bill with death and adversity.

The scout had seemed always to have a loophole of escape.

But had the end come at last, like the pitcher carried once too often to the well?

At first Little Sure Shot was so nonplused that he could hardly set his mind upon what he saw.

But soon he regained full control of senses and nerves, and took in the whole situation.

Finding that Buffalo Bill was following them, and alone, they being three against him, they had planned his death or capture, and he had ridden into a trap.

If a prisoner, he must be rescued.

If dead, he must be avenged.

Little Sure Shot was on his mettle.

The odds against him he did not take into consideration, save to be more cautious.

He would first find just where the horses of the men were.

That they suspected no further pursuit was shown by their placing no guard, for the three men were in camp.

And the three still wore their masks.

Determined to find the horses first, Little Sure Shot silently began the search.

He crept as noiselessly as a snake through the timber, and at last found the horses in a bend of the creek, where there were no trees and good grass.

There was the scout's horse with the rest.

They were staked out to feed, and their bridles and saddles lay near.

First, Little Sure Shot went up to the black, saddled and bridled him, and led him to the creek.

The bank was shelving, so that he could ride down easily, and the water was not deep there, nor the distance across great.

Fastening the black, he saddled and bridled the three other horses and led them to the bank.

He could lead but one across at a time, for there was the camp not a hundred yards away, and the splashing could be easily heard by the outlaws.

Mounting the black, and grasping the reins close of one of the other horses, the boy rode into the stream.

Making a detour, once he got across, he went to where he had left his own horse.

There he left the led horse.

Then he rode the black back for another.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

The men could be seen, still seated about the camp-fire, and near it lay the motionless form of Buffalo Bill.

Another horse was taken across in the same quiet way and left with the others.

Then another trip was made for the last of the outlaws' horses.

This one, too, was led across in safety, and when with the others, the boy tied the four together, bit and bit, and passed a stake line from each one on the end to his own saddle horse.

Then he mounted his horse, and rode nearer to the camp of the outlaws.

Halting when several hundred yards distant, he went forward on foot to reconnoiter.

He saw that the men had finished their supper.

But there lay the form of the scout, and they did not appear to have given him anything to eat.

So, again, the fear came over the boy that Buffalo Bill must be dead.

"I will avenge him," broke from between his set teeth.

More wood had been thrown upon the fire, and it was blazing brightly now.

The three outlaws were plainly revealed, as also the prostrate form of the scout.

It looked to the watching boy as though the outlaws did not intend to remain there all night.

Had they a retreat near in the mountains, he argued, they would have gone to it and not halted there.

So it looked to Little Sure Shot as though they intended to leave their camp before long.

What he did, then, must be quickly done.

Nearer and still nearer he crept to the camp.

The timber was quite open just there, and he had to be very careful in making his way from tree to tree.

At last he got in the position he desired, and brought his rifle around for use.

Another moment, and he was covering, with steady aim, the chief of the road agents.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNERRING SHOT.

Sure Shot had a deadly aim right at the head of the outlaw leader.

Had he fired, the man would never have known what killed him.

But he did not pull trigger.

The rifle was lowered, and the boy gave a slight exclamation.

Just in time to save the man from death, the thought had come to him that it was Diablo Dick, his friend!

Thus he sat for a moment, undecided.

"I do not believe he is my old pard, Diablo Dick, but I will give him the benefit of a doubt.

"I would not kill Dick, if he had turned road agent.

"No; I could not do that; so, whoever he is that leads the band, his life is saved through the doubt in my mind.

"I only wish that I could see his face.

"Now, to pick off one of the other two, and then I believe I am master of this camp."

The youth felt pretty sure that if he killed one of the three outlaws, the other two would break for their lives.

Dropping his rifle, then, he could use his revolvers and do what else he could to stampede the remaining two, and find out if Buffalo Bill were dead or alive.

If dead, then the boy made up his mind that he would keep hot on the trail of those two men until he could kill a second one and capture the man who he knew had called himself Diablo Dick.

So the rifle was again raised, and just as the leader called out:

"Come, we must get out of this, men."

Hardly had the last word been uttered, when the finger of Little Sure Shot touched the trigger of his rifle.

The flash and report came together, and the outlaw at whom he had aimed, just arising to his feet, sank back in a heap upon the ground.

Like a deer, the boy ran back to his horses, not waiting to see the result of his shot, and, nearing them, he halted, placed his hands to his lips, and shouted, hoarsely:

"Come on, captain; I got one of 'em!"

Then, with rare skill, he imitated the notes of a bugle giving a call, and, leaping into the saddle of his own horse, led the other four animals at a gallop straight toward the camp, as though cavalrymen were charging in response to the bugle call.

But the outlaw leader and his remaining man had not waited an instant after that fatal shot, which laid low one of the trio.

They had started in surprise and terror at the shot, stood a second, undecided, until the boy's voice was heard, and then they bounded away like deer toward where their horses had been left.

At first, they feared they might have gone in the wrong direction in their haste and in the darkness.

No horses were there.

They gazed about them in amazement and terror.

"Is this the place, captain?" asked the man.

"Yes."

"But the horses are gone?"

"What shall we do?"

"Hark!"

It was the ringing peal of the notes made by the boy in imitation of a bugle.

"Come!"

With this, the leader bounded into the stream, crossed, followed closely by the other, and they then ran for their lives through the timber beyond.

Each one believed that the scout and troop of cavalry had attacked their temporary camp.

They had merely had time to grasp their rifles before they fled.

Now they found themselves on foot in the night, but two of their band, that had been five in the morning, left to tell the story, and the chances against them, they believed, of their escaping with their lives.

Like deer they ran, and back toward the camp they heard loud voices shouting out orders.

It seemed to them that there were many men.

Then came again the notes of the bugle, and this added to their speed.

They believed that they were being pursued now.

That the way they had gone had been discovered, and on they sped with all the speed and endurance that was in them.

And back at the camp, the one boy that had fired the unerring and fatal shot, had shouted hoarse orders, imitated the bugle call, and ridden his horse furiously about, leading the other animals, would have laughed outright at the outlaws' stampede but for that motionless form lying there.

Having become convinced that the outlaws were far away, flying for their lives, and not watching him, Sure Shot rode back to the camp, with dread at his heart at what he should discover.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW IT HAPPENED.

When Sure Shot had hitched his horses he approached the camp-fire with a feeling that almost unnerved him, for he had the fear that he would find the scout dead.

There he lay, as motionless as before, and revealed by the light of the fire.

But as the glow of the firelight fell upon the boy, revealing him distinctly, there was heard the words:

"Well, boy pard, is it you, is it?

"I half suspected it, when I heard all that racket."

With a bound, the youth sprang to the side of the scout, and cried:

"Oh, Mr. Cody!

"You are not dead, then?"

"Not very, boy pard, though I had a close call; for, see this wound in my head, where the bullet tore along, glancing on the skull, and cutting its way out."

"I see it, and it was very nearly fatal."

"Yes, for it knocked me out of my saddle and also stunned me.

"When I regained consciousness, I was lying here, bound, and the road agents supposed I was dead, and were discussing what they would do with my body.

"I am still a little dazed."

"I don't wonder; but I'll soon have you all right."

While he spoke, the boy was untying the lasso that bound the hands and feet of the scout, for the outlaws had bound him and made sure of him, should he not be dead.

"Who is with you, Sure Shot?"

"My horse."

"Well, I at first suspected you had a troop of cavalry with you; but, then, as no one showed up, I came to the conclusion that you had, as usual, disobeyed orders, and come on alone after me.

"But right glad am I that you did."

"You see, I had a presentiment of evil, and, as Nate Nixon was all right, I came on after you.

"But I got one of the gang."

"So I see.

"He never moved a muscle after your bullet struck him."

"And I've got their horses."

"No!"

"Yes; I sneaked them across the stream first, so as to be sure of them, and put the other two afoot."

"Then, we ought to catch them."

"No; I guess not, as they are on foot, and it is night."

"Then, too, I've got to look after your wound, and we'd better go away from here and camp for the night, as, if those fellows did suspect the trick I played on them and return, they might give us trouble."

"You are right, but I don't think they will come back, for they went away from here like scared coyotes."

"There, now you are free, and if you can ride a short distance, we will find another camp."

"Oh, I can ride all right."

"The wound has stopped bleeding, and when dressed will not trouble me."

As he spoke, Buffalo Bill arose to his feet, though he at first reeled as though dizzy from weakness.

But he soon rallied, and, when the camp outfit of the outlaws had been gathered up, Little Sure Shot went over to the body of the dead man, and wrapped it closely in a blanket.

Then, with Buffalo Bill's aid, it was strapped in the saddle of one of the horses, and, mounting, the youth and the scout whom he had so daringly rescued, rode away, going back on the trail they had come.

"We will camp in the valley near the last hold up yesterday," said Buffalo Bill.

And, as they rode along, the scout told how he had come to be ambushed.

"You see, Sure Shot, they sighted me soon after I did them."

"Then I lost sight of them, but followed at a swift run, hoping to get within range of my rifle."

"When next I caught sight of them they were all of two-thirds of a mile ahead, and fast disappearing in some timber."

"I remember now that I saw but two of them, but supposed the other was on ahead."

"I was not cautious enough, for the third was lying in ambush for me."

"That was their little game, and I lost."

"For I remember only a shot, then all was blank."

"When I returned to consciousness I saw a fire, and heard voices."

"It was night, and I found I was bound, and, though my mind was dazed, I listened and discovered the situation."

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"I had been picked up, bound, and was now believed to be dead."

"As they so regarded me, I decided to play dead until I got a chance to see what I could do to help myself."

"What to do I was considering, when your shot suddenly startled me, and you know the rest."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NIGHT CAMP.

After a couple of hours' ride, the valley was reached, and a good camping place found for the balance of the night, for it was now past twelve o'clock.

Little Sure Shot insisted upon doing all the work, staking the horses out and building the fire, and, as the scout's head was painful and he felt dizzy, he had to allow him to do so.

The body of the outlaw was first placed apart from the camp, the horses unsaddled and staked out, and then wood gathered and a camp-fire made.

This done, Little Sure Shot looked at the wound in the scout's head.

As both he and Buffalo Bill always went prepared with arnica and bandages, Sure Shot set about dressing the wound with a skill born of much experience.

He saw that the bullet had struck just above the forehead, cut through the scalp, glanced on the skull, and, keeping along it for several inches, had come out, passed through the hat the scout wore, and gone on its way.

Parting the long hair away from the two wounds, Little Sure Shot washed them well, bathed them with arnica, and then bandaged them.

Then he got supper for both of them, spread their blankets, and the two pards, the great scout and the boy, turned in for the night, with no dread of danger, for on foot the two outlaws, did they come that way, could not get there before morning.

Anxious about the wounded scout, it was some time before Little Sure Shot went to sleep.

But he awoke as the sun was rising, and found Buffalo Bill awake.

"How do you feel, Mr. Cody?" he asked, quickly.

"Fine, save a sore head."

"I'm all right, thanks to a hard head and your surgery."

"I'm mighty glad."

"Now, we'll have breakfast pretty soon, and then shall it be San Gabriel or the fort?"

"San Gabriel, for our man yonder belongs there, and we had better carry the body to Tom Totten."

"So I think."

"And try and find out who are the associates of this man, and the two whom Nate Nixon carried in last night, and by that means discover the rest of the band, when, if I am not mistaken, there will be some hanging done in San Gabriel."

"So I think." And Little Sure Shot's thoughts seemed busy.

He went about his duties quietly, aided by the scout; the fire was built up, horses given a fresh grazing ground and water, and breakfast prepared.

As the two pards were eating the meal, the boy suddenly asked:

"Mr. Cody, did you take notice particularly of the leader of the outlaws?"

"I cannot just say that I did, boy pard, as I was so confused in my mind from this wound."

"I'll dress it again before we leave, and the doctor at San Gabriel can see to it then."

"Oh, it's all right."

"Don't give it another thought."

"But why did you ask me about the leader of the outlaws?"

"You heard what Nate Nixon said yesterday?"

"That he was Diablo Dick?"

"Yes."

"Well, he may be; but I do not believe it."

"Nor do I."

"Why, I had him covered, intending to kill him, last night, when it flashed upon me what Nate had said, and I turned my gun and took a bead on the man I killed."

"I am glad that you did give him the benefit of a doubt, and I wish to capture Diablo Dick, if he it is, not kill him."

"Well, I don't wish to kill him, or see him killed."

"If he has been again in San Gabriel we can find it out, and I will have to see him to believe he is the road agent chief, for, bad as Diablo Dick may be in some ways, I cannot believe he is either a murderer or a thief."

"I feel the same way, boy pard, but all the same I am anxious to capture Diablo Dick, and that is what took me to San Gabriel this time."

"But why do you wish to capture him, Mr. Cody?"

"I'll tell you when we return to the fort, Little Sure Shot, for I wish to have a talk with your father, and in your presence, and with Captain Fred Foster also present."

"I cannot say more now, boy pard, but will explain then."

"Now, let us take the trail for San Gabriel and find out just who the live pards are of the three dead men we have picked out of the road agent band, for I am sure those outlaws are out of the camps, and not an organized road gang." And half an hour after the two pards were on the trail to San Gabriel.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARDS' ARRIVAL.

It was a strange cavalcade that the miners saw riding along the stage trail leading into San Gabriel.

It was nearly noon, and, as the men of the settlement were preparing to knock off work for dinner, those of them who were not idle, they saw Buffalo Bill and Little Sure Shot riding side by side.

Both the scout and the youth were well known in the settlement.

Close behind them was a led horse, and strapped to his saddle was the form of a dead man.

In the rear were two other horses, saddled and bridled, but riderless.

The men all turned curious glances upon the party, and saw them ride straight up to the old Mission Inn at San Gabriel.

There Tom Totten stood, talking to Driver Nate Nixon, who did not start back on his return trip until the next day, and was discussing the carrying back of quite a lot

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

15

of gold, which, however, he was not anxious to take, until he saw Buffalo Bill and the boy coming up the trail, and then he said:

"If Buffalo Bill and Little Sure Shot will go along to the fort with me this run, Pard Tom, I'll take back all the gold dust yer has in ther mines of San Gabriel, if ther critters kin pull it."

"Well, ask them, Nate."

"But they've got a dead body there, and some led horses."

"They has, fer a fact."

"You bet they've been right in it with both feet, and glad I is ter see that ther boy found Buffalo Bill, and no harm happened ther scout, after all."

"He has his head bandaged up, I see."

"So he has."

"Been wounded, sure as shootin'; so ther kid wasn't far wrong in sayin' he hed a feeling of trouble ter happen ter Buffalo Bill."

As Nate Nixon spoke, the scout and Little Sure Shot came within call, while behind them a short distance half a hundred men were hurrying along to see what had been the racket, as they had a dead body along and were known to have gone after the outlaws who had held up Nate Nixon's coach the day before.

"Ho, Cody, I'm glad to see you, and you, too, High-flyer."

"What game have you there?" called out Tom Totten, as the two came within hail.

"It's some of Sure Shot's shooting, not mine, and is one of Nate Nixon's foes, who held him up yesterday," said Buffalo Bill.

"You seem to have been in trouble, Cody," said Tom Totten, as the scout dismounted.

"I have been, but Little Sure Shot got me out—no, it is nothing much, only a scratch along the top of my head, fired from ambush."

"I'll tell you about it, Totten, as soon as you have had some one put that body away until it can be buried."

"By the way, see if you know the man?"

"I do."

"It is Lem Hollis, but I would never have suspected him of being a road agent, any more than I would the two men Nate Nixon brought in."

"Just find out who were their particular pards here, and you'll get at the rest of the band; only don't let any one suspect your intention," whispered Buffalo Bill.

The body having been placed, with the other two, for burial that afternoon, the scout and Little Sure Shot went with Tom Totten to his own room to have a talk, Nate Nixon accompanying them, while a messenger had been sent off after the settlement doctor to see Buffalo Bill, and who had far more gunshot wounds to look after than he did cases of illness.

San Gabriel was a remarkable place for health, though for cases of "sudden death" it had few equals, and an undertaker was oftener employed there than a doctor.

Still, "Drugs," as the doctor was called for short, made a good living in the settlement, as he was also the undertaker, and when he lost doctoring a patient by sudden death he made it up in burying him.

When "Drugs" arrived he was glad to find the great scout was his patient, and he soon had his wound in

good shape and told him that it would give him little trouble, though it had been a most remarkably close call.

When the doctor had left and dinner was over, the scout, Sure Shot, and Nate Nixon again went with Tom Totten to his room to have a talk, and try and find out just who were the road agents that were from San Gabriel, living apparently honest lives, but in reality committing crimes against the community by their acts of lawlessness.

CHAPTER XVI.

STILL UNKNOWN.

The three dead outlaws were known in San Gabriel. There was no denying that.

And more, not one of them had been looked upon as men who would lead lawless lives.

They were all supposed to be honest miners.

But they had been killed with masks upon their faces, and holding up the coach.

At least two of them had been thus killed, and the other, Buffalo Bill said, was the man who had fired upon him from ambush, for, while "playing dead" in the camp, he had heard the man seated at the camp-fire tell just how he, Buffalo Bill, had toppled from his saddle at the shot.

But who were the leader and his comrade?

The former claimed to be Diablo Dick.

If so, he did not then dwell in San Gabriel.

He had not been seen there, or at least reported having been seen by any one, since the great Indian battle, when Buffalo Bill had guided the troops there in time to save the settlement from death and destruction.

Then Diablo Dick, after winning golden opinions from all for his courage, and rendering most valuable service throughout, had quietly skipped away.

It was said that he had feared recognition and arrest by Buffalo Bill for a crime committed long before.

Whether this report was true or not, Diablo Dick certainly cleared out silently and quickly, and had not been seen until the leader of the road agents had claimed to be him.

And, strange to say, though Diablo Dick had been looked upon as a bad man, one whom most every one dreaded, that the road agent chief should be the so-called desperado many doubted.

It would be next to impossible to find who was missing from the settlement, and then discover the two road agents, if one was not Diablo Dick, for, by the time all could be called together, the missing ones could get in and be on hand to report.

The fact that the three dead men were found to be unsuspected miners in their midst caused a very uneasy feeling to fall upon all.

No one seemed to know just whom to trust.

"But who were the intimates of these three dead men?"

Buffalo Bill had asked the question.

It was for Tom Totten to answer, for he knew intimately every man in settlement.

He knew, too, just who they were, as far as it was possible for them to find out; what they did, and who were their particular pards.

After a moment of thought, he said:

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"There were seven men, I recall, who were close pards; seemed to form a kind of clan."

"Who were they?" asked the scout.

"Three of them are the dead ones brought in."

"And the others?"

"Were miners."

"What are their names?"

"Luke Luly, Nat Farley, Mike Lemley and Porter Payne," answered Tom Totten.

"Where are they?"

"I saw Luke Luly and Nat Farley here to-day, but Lemley and Payne I have not noticed for a day or two."

"Suppose you send for a couple of dozen men, one at a time, Mr. Totten, as though to question them as to who these other two road agents could be, and among them have the four men you have named appear."

"All right, Mr. Cody; I will do it."

"I will go out myself and select those I wish to come, and who would cause no suspicion in doing so to fall upon them."

Going out, Tom Totten remained for half an hour or more, and when he came in he said that he had sent for as many as twenty men to come, among them the four whom he had mentioned.

As sent for, one by one they came in, and they were questioned as to who they thought might be others of the road agent band.

Men were very cautious then in San Gabriel of denouncing any one, for it meant a fight, foot race, perhaps a funeral, and few had suspicions to express.

Of the four named, Nat Farley expressed himself very decidedly that it was Diablo Dick and some unknown pard, who had got the three others to join them, and that no one else was implicated.

Though examined apart, Luke Luly expressed the same views exactly.

By a coincidence, the two last called in were Mike Lemley and Porter Payne.

They said about the same thing—that the three men who had been killed had doubtless been led away by Diablo Dick and the man with him, whoever he might be, and they would as soon have suspected themselves as the trio of pards that had been proven road agents.

As for themselves, they said, they had only heard of the hold up an hour before, having been working a distant mine they had in partnership, and just come in.

This ended the examination, and Tom Totten said:

"Well, we are about where we were before, Mr. Cody."

"Oh, no."

"Why what have you discovered?"

"Much."

"Ditto me."

"I can put my hands on four of the road agent band, if not the two who escaped us, and I'll bet big money on it," said Little Sure Shot, and both Tom Totten and Nate Nixon looked at him in surprise, while Buffalo Bill said:

"He is right."

"Let matters rest as they are, for we need search no farther, only bide our time."

CHAPTER XVII.

A CALL FOR HELP.

Impressed with the words of Little Sure Shot, and the utterances of the scout, who, they saw, understood the youth, neither Tom Totten nor Nate Nixon asked any more questions, for they saw that Buffalo Bill wished to let the matter drop for the present.

That afternoon the three road agents were buried, and the whole community turned out for the occasion.

Buffalo Bill had been asked by Tom Totten if he and the youth would go as an escort to the coach the next morning, as a large amount of gold was to be sent, and he frankly said:

"I will go for a part of the way with Little Sure Shot, who can continue on to the fort with Nate, and Colonel Farrar will allow an escort from there."

"But I sent a score of my scouts to await me in a certain place, and I will have to branch off the trail to go after them."

"But Nate will get through all right."

This was guarantee enough for Tom Totten, and he decided to send the gold through the next morning.

Bright and early the coach came around before the inn, but the horses of Buffalo Bill and Little Sure Shot were not to be seen, for the scout thought it best to start ahead, before daybreak, and then not be seen going with Nate as an escort.

The horses of the outlaws Tom Totten had purchased from them, for none disputed their claim, as to the victor belonged the spoils, so that the scout and Little Sure Shot rode off mounted upon their own splendid animals.

After passing the last miner's cabin Nate Nixon saw them ahead in the trail, and as he came up, called out:

"I'm mighty glad you is along, pards, fer I feels shaky about this trip, being as I has so much dust aboard."

"All right, Nate, we'll follow within hearing of a shot, so as to be near if wanted."

"At Red Range I'll leave you, for I am going after some of my men, to take them on to the fort, for I sent them to a rendezvous, expecting to make a scout with them."

"But things have turned out different since I left the fort; so I'll go after them, but Sure Shot will hang on your trail, and you know what he is."

"You bet I does, and by the time we reach Red Range I guess I'll have passed the danger points, this side of the fort, at least."

"Now, I'll push on, and if I want you bad, I'll shout."

The coach soon disappeared ahead on the trail, and the two pards followed some distance behind at a pace that would keep them within call.

Several hours passed, and Nate Nixon was drawing near to the steep trail, which led down into the little valley where he had last met the road agents, and Buffalo Bill's coming, with Little Sure Shot's deadly aim, at long range, had scared them off.

In glancing well ahead, Nate Nixon's eyes fell upon a horseman in the trail.

"It's ther mad soldier, as I am a livin' sinner."

"Jist what I shall do, I don't know."

"I don't want ter skeer him by firing a shot that will

bring up my pards, so I'll jist palaver with him, ef he hain't on the shoot, until they comes up and catches him."

So saying, he placed his revolver on the box by his side, and drove on at a swifter pace.

There sat the mad soldier, looking the same as when last seen.

He awaited the approach of the coach, and then called out, in a commanding tone:

"Halt!"

Nate Nixon promptly obeyed.

"Where are they?"

"Who, pard?"

"The dead."

"They oughter be in their graves, but ef they isn't they hain't been seen, and what's more, I don't want ter see 'em."

"You have not seen them?"

"No."

"I must find them."

"I has some pards a-coming who will be along soon, and maybe they kin tell you, fer they knows more about dead folks than I does."

"Are they dead?"

"No, they are very much alive."

"I don't wish to see them."

"I talk only to the dead."

"Yer don't call me dead, does yer?"

"Yes, you are dead, as I am."

"We are lost spirits roaming upon earth, trying to do that which we left undone when in the body, and by which we will find eternal rest."

"I seek the dead, like ourselves, and must find them."

"Spirit brother, we will meet again."

"Not if I see you first, I'm blamed ef we will," cried Nate, positively frightened by the words and looks of the mad soldier, who wheeled his horse and darted away down the river, unheeding the driver's call for him to halt.

As he kept on, Nate grasped his revolver and fired three shots rapidly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECOND APPEAL FOR HELP.

In five minutes after the three shots were fired Buffalo Bill and Little Sure Shot were alongside of the coach.

"Ho, Nate, did you drive them off?"

"Pard Cody, I has been in close communion with a spirit."

"Nonsense, Nate."

"No, it were ther mad soldier."

"Ha! which way did he go?"

"Down thet ridge."

"Well, I will follow in his trail; you go on wifh the coach, boy pard, and—hark! some one is coming!"

All listened, and heard some one coming rapidly toward the coach by a trail that came along the ridge and crossed the stage road. They sat with their revolvers ready, and a moment after there dashed into view a single horseman.

He half reined up at sight of the coach, but instantly spurred on and called out:

"This trail will take me to Fort Comanche, will it not?"

His appearance indicated his nationality as Mexican,

and he spoke English with an accent, while he was dressed as a military scout, and carried a sabre.

"Yes, señor, but may I ask what business carries you in such haste to the fort, for I am a government officer?" responded Buffalo Bill.

"A band of Comanches from the mountains of the Gila River crossed into Mexico at Fronteras, and captured a number of women and children from the haciendas, along with much booty, and the Señor Major Fernando Hermanas, of the Mexican Lanceros, has pursued them to the foothills, and sent me on to report to the commandant of the fort that he would beg for aid to continue the pursuit."

The man spoke rapidly, but not a word did Buffalo Bill miss, and he thought and acted promptly, for he said:

"Little Sure Shot, you return with this courier, and on your way go to the ruined old Mexican mission in the Red Range, and there you will find twenty of my scouts; take them with you.

"You know the country where the Comanches have gone better than any one else, and you can guide the Mexican major there, and have my scouts for valuable allies."

"Nat, you are going on to the fort, and have heard what this courier says; so push ahead with all speed, and report it to Colonel Farrar, and just what I have told Little Sure Shot to do."

"I will not give up the chance of catching that mad soldier; so I follow his trail at once, and if I lose it, will go on after Sure Shot."

"Now you know just what to do."

"Señor, you can tell your commandant that this young man is the son of Colonel Farrar, and the best guide in this part of the country, boy though he is in years, and that he thoroughly understands the Indians, having long been their captive in those very hills."

"I thank the señor, and I will at once follow where the young señor leads," said the Mexican scout, politely.

"Well, Sure Shot, I leave the work to you; and there is no need of telling you that time is precious, if you wish to rescue those Mexican women before the Comanches reach their strongholds."

"I'm off; but do you take care of yourself, Señor Cody, for I don't half like your going after that mad soldier alone."

"Don't mind me, for I'll pan out all O. K.," called out Buffalo Bill, as the youth and the Mexican scout started back on the trail by which the latter had come.

"Now, Nate, give me full particulars about this mad soldier, and then we'll part company, and don't spare your horses in getting to the fort and reporting all to Colonel Farrar, as you know it."

"I'll do it, Pard Cody," answered Nate, and he at once reported to Buffalo Bill just what had occurred at his meeting with the mad soldier.

Buffalo Bill listened attentively, then waved a good-by to the driver, who drove rapidly on, and, dismounting, examined with great care the tracks of the horse ridden by the mad soldier.

"I've got his trail down fine—now to follow him," he muttered.

Leaping into his saddle, he started off down the ridge, following the trail of the strange man, who had so startled Nate by telling him that he was a spirit.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

In the meantime Little Sure Shot and the Mexican scout were flying along at a rapid pace, for the youth was a good one to set a pace when help was needed.

To the surprise of the scout, the youth spoke to him in fair Spanish, and began to question him all about the force of the Comanches, the way they had retreated, the number of Mexican soldiers under the major's command, and where they then were.

"We'll head those Comanches off," he said, quietly, after hearing the scout's whole story.

CHAPTER XIX.

BUFFALO BILL'S RIFLE-SHOTS.

The old mission on the Red Range, fortunately, lay almost in the trail that Little Sure Shot and the Mexican scout had to follow to reach the troop of lancers.

The latter were some scores of miles distant from the old mission, where the scouts were encamped, and to reach Buffalo Bill's men was a ride of a dozen miles from the point where the Mexican had come into the stage trail.

The Mexican scout explained to Little Sure Shot that he had left his command soon after daylight, and the lancers were to push slowly on after the Comanches until he returned with word, or help, from the Mexican fort.

The commander of the lancers had full knowledge that it was not his right to invade American territory, but as no United States troops were near, the Comanches not far ahead of him, and many captives had been taken, he had decided to push on and send word as soon as possible to the fort of what he was doing, and ask for aid.

Fortunately, the courier had met Buffalo Bill, and the scout had acted promptly, and as he deemed for the best, for his scouts, under Sure Shot, could be with the Mexican commander a day before the United States cavalry from the fort could reach there, and then, too, the young guide would be master of the situation, knowing the country as he did, and the Indians, believing that they could not be pressed hard on American soil by the Mexicans.

In just an hour and a half Little Sure Shot and the Mexican scout made the ride to the old ruin, for the trail was a good one.

The scout on duty reported their coming, and as they drew rein there stood just a score of splendid fellows, known as "Buffalo Bill's Rifle-Shots," at the fort.

They were a daring, noble-hearted lot of men, picturesque in their dress, armed with rifles, belt of arms, lariat, and a sabre, splendidly mounted all of them, and ready for any call that might be made upon them.

Crude they might be, wild-looking, blunt-spoken, but every inch men to tie to in distress.

They greeted the youth with a shout of warm welcome, and listened to what he had to say, when the scout in charge, Ben Willis, said:

"Put on your soldier cap and lead us, Little Sure Shot, and in the absence of our chief you will be captain."

"Give the word and we follow, if it's ter tackle the Mexicans, instead of helping them."

"All right; we'll push on as soon as our horses have had a short rest."

"Boys, see to them two horses, strip them of their rig, and get us an early dinner, and by that means we'll be in

the saddle within an hour, Captain Sure Shot," said Ben Willis.

The two horses were soon stripped of bridles and saddles, and staked out, and dinner was put on, while the scouts began to pack up for a long ride.

In addition to the horses they each rode, they had half a dozen led animals in case of accidents, and two of these carried the camp outfit.

Dinner was soon ready, and a good, square meal it was, and then, to relieve the horses ridden by Little Sure Shot and the Mexican scout, Ben Willis ordered two of the extra animals saddled for them, allowing theirs to run loose without weight.

It was just one hour after their arrival at the old ruin, when Little Sure Shot rode to the front with the Mexican scout close by his side, and the others following.

"You are the captain; so set the pace, and we'll keep with you, Little Sure Shot," called out Ben Willis, calling the youth by the name he was known by to all at the fort, for there were no airs about the youth, if he was the colonel's son, and ever since he had been restored to his father and mother his greatest delight had been to go on scouts with Buffalo Bill, and be ready for any work or duty.

Knowing what his life had been since he had parted with him, a little boy of seven, nearly ten years before, and hoping to see him enter West Point and become a soldier, Colonel Farrar encouraged him in all his wild career on the plains, knowing that it would serve him well in his profession, and thinking it would be time for him to buckle down to hard study when he should go East.

So it was that Little Sure Shot was building up knowledge that would be invaluable to him as an officer of the army in coming years, for he would know the Indian and border life from the very foundation, and have learned all from years of hard and bitter experience.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BOY GUIDE.

Little Sure Shot did "set the pace," and it was one that kept the horses in a sweeping gallop.

He was anxious to overtake the Mexican lancers, find out just how far ahead the Comanches were, and then he knew, with his knowledge of the country, he could move by night and give the Indians a surprise.

So he rode hard, feeling that the horses could rest going at the slow pace the Mexican lancers would be traveling in pursuit.

Having learned from the scout the direction the lancers were traveling, Little Sure Shot said:

"Good! We can save a dozen miles and head them off."

"I will leave the trail and strike across country."

"Should we come out ahead of the Indians, why, we will fight them, that's all."

"Anyway, we will head off the lancers, I know."

With this he turned squarely off from the trail, and one and all of the scouts were delighted to see how unerringly he went on his way, with no hesitation, no uncertainty in his movements.

Suddenly, after having gone a dozen miles, he was seen to halt, place his hand to his ear, and listen.

"We will just reach them, and they are the lanceros, not the Comanches," he called out.

Keen scouts though they were, not another one had heard a sound.

The acute ear of the youth had heard the clash of steel, and as all, after a few moments of listening, caught the rumble of hoof falls and clashing of metal, they knew that the young guide had gone true and had made no mistake as to whom they were to meet.

"Come, pards, follow me, for there come the Mexican lanceros," suddenly shouted Little Sure Shot, and, drawing his sabre, he dashed forward, followed by Buffalo Bill's swordsmen scouts.

The Mexican lanceros were just filing out of a thick growth of timber, and, startled by the sight of the charging scouts, with their swords drawn, quickly wheeled from column into line to meet, as they believed, a foe.

But on the left of the young guide the Mexican commander suddenly recognized his own scout, Pedro, and called to his men that they were friends.

Another moment and the scouts had drawn rein, and the Mexican scout said:

"Señor Major Hermanas, this young señor is sent by the great scout Buffalo Bill to guide you in pursuit of the Comanches.

"I met the señors on the trail, and the Señor Buffalo Bill also sent word to the fort for troopers to come to your aid.

"The young señor is the son of the American commandant Colonel Farrar, and he knows this country perfectly."

"I am glad to meet the Señor Farrar, and have his services as guide, for, through a friend at your fort I have heard of you and your strange life," replied Major Hermanas, a handsome young officer, daring and resolute in time of need, as he had shown in invading American territory rather than let the Comanches escape him.

Sure Shot took his proffered hand, thanked him for what he had said, and then remarked:

"You must pardon me, señor, if I ask many questions, but I wish to know just what to do."

"By knowing the country, I left the trail and saved a dozen miles, heading you off here, and I can do as much for the Indians."

"Bueno! Ask what you please, señor."

"How many men have you, please?"

"Ninety."

"How far do you think the Indians are ahead?"

"Ten miles, at least."

"And their number?"

"Not less than a couple of hundred, if not a few more."

"How many captives have they?"

"All of forty—women and children."

"It is now three hours before sunset, and if you will continue to follow on this trail, which they have left plainly marked, keeping half a hundred of your men with you, and lending me the balance, I will push through a pass I know well, and head the Comanches off by sunset."

"Good!"

"They know you are in pursuit?"

"Yes, we have seen their scouts watching us."

"Very well; push them as hard as you please, only do

not ride into an ambush, and one of my men will remain with you.

"I can head them off within two hours, by the pass I spoke of, and they will find us waiting for them, and the surprise we give them will be worth a hundred troopers to us at least."

"I am ready to start when you are, señor."

"I am also ready," and after a few words of further instruction to the Mexican officer, and being introduced to a lieutenant who was to accompany him with thirty-five of the Mexican lanceros, Little Sure Shot rode straight across the redskin trail, and disappeared in the timber, Buffalo Bill's scouts bringing up the rear.

In a few minutes the two commands were out of sight of each other, and both pushing on their separate ways, the Mexican officer and his men glad to have such brave allies come to their aid.

CHAPTER XXI.

LITTLE SURE SHOT'S SWOOP.

There was no doubt in the minds of the scouts and Mexican lanceros who were following him that the young guide knew just what he was about.

He rode ahead at a canter, the Mexican officer by his side, and followed no trail.

He seemed to be anxious to get in under the shadow of the mountains, where the timber was heavy.

After a canter of half an hour he reached the base of the mountain, which there rose abruptly in a bluff, and could not be scaled.

It appeared to have the same look all along, and yet the boy guide did not hesitate, keeping up the same steady gait.

At last he turned abruptly off to the right, toward the bold bluff.

The scouts knew that he was in a land new to them, and where Comanches held full sway.

But they did not hesitate to follow the youth unquestioned.

They knew that he had been a captive of these same Comanches, and as a boy had led a band of Indian youths all through those very hills and mountains.

It seemed to the scouts and lanceros, however, that there was no break in the bold bluffs.

But Little Sure Shot soon came to a small stream and rode into it.

"Where Indian ponies can come down our horses can go up," was the only comment he made, and so kept on in the bed of the stream, the others following in Indian file.

It was soon seen that the stream came down through the cliff by a winding and steep course.

But the leader held on, and the horses of the others followed.

It was a climb of a couple of miles, but when at last the boy turned out of the stream he was on the top of the mountain range and among a group of rocks that completely concealed men and horses.

"The Indian trail to the village was not a quarter of a mile from here, señor."

"It is certain the band has not passed, and the village is a dozen miles away; so they will continue on to it in the

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

night—at least such is their intention—and try to lead the lanceros into a trap some distance from here.

"But we will head them off in that intention, and if Major Hamanas has pushed them hard we won't have long to wait.

"I will go ahead on foot and reconnoiter."

So saying, Little Sure Shot walked on ahead, leaving men and horses to rest where they were.

He had not been gone half an hour before he was seen returning at a run, so that the men were mounted and ready for action when he arrived.

"They are coming; but we have time to get into position," he said to the Mexican major.

Then he mounted his horse and again led the way.

A ledge of rocks running along the ridge hid them from view from any one coming up the trail, and here they halted.

All saw the well-traveled trail not a hundred yards away.

"If no redskin comes from the village and discovers us, we are all right for a surprise; but in two hours' time they could bring a thousand warriors from the village upon us," said Little Sure Shot, and all realized the chances he had taken to get into position to head off and surprise the raiders.

"They will be driving their captives ahead of them, as they are being pursued, so our plan will be not to fire until the head of the march gets where they can discover us.

"Then all fire from on foot into the band of braves, and then charge them, save a few of your men, señor, whom you appoint to go at once to the captives and start them back.

"If the major is close up, all pursuit from this force we can readily beat off, and we can have a long start of the braves from the village, for they will have to send there for them.

"By morning we will be supported by troops from the fort, for my father is a rapid mover in sending men to a rescue.

"You hear them now; so they will be along within fifteen minutes."

All waited patiently, and the Indians soon came in sight, wholly unsuspecting danger ahead of them.

As Little Sure Shot had said, the captives were in front, mounted upon ponies, while many more animals were laden down with booty.

A score of braves were driving them on as fast as they could, while the rest of the band, a couple of hundred in number, were keeping close up.

"Fire!"

The order was given just as the head of the column got even with the ledge, the men rising and firing over it, and sixty rifles flashed together.

"Charge!"

The men had sprung into their saddles and, saber in right, they were upon the startled Comanches, many of whom had gone down under the first fire.

It was a mad rush, and the Comanches fled in dismay, while a number of Mexicans swept around the captives and pack animals, turned them to the right about, and the retreat was begun.

It was a complete swoop for the young guide.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RETREAT BY NIGHT.

It was apparently a scene of wild confusion, and yet all went well and with the system of perfectly disciplined men.

The first volley, the charge, the stampede of the Indians, the getting the captives faced about, the pack animals also, and the rally of the soldiers and scouts about them, to prevent recapture and resist the attack of the Comanches, who quickly saw the force of their foes, that they were four braves to one paleface, and so determined to make a fight for prisoners and booty, all happened within less than a quarter of an hour.

But even as the braves rallied, the notes of a bugle were heard on the trail, and then came the Mexican lanceros, under Major Harmanas, into view.

They came in line of battle, their lances in rest, and half a hundred strong.

With one wild cheer they rode down upon the Indians, who, caught between two fires, stood bravely almost within sight of their homes, to fight it out.

But the terrible yell of Buffalo Bill's scouts sent a chill to their hearts, and with revolvers in each hand they, too, led by Little Sure Shot, went upon the redskins like an avalanche.

Again the redskins broke, and the second short, decisive battle was won.

The scouts then formed as a rear guard, a few wounded among them, and the lanceros were taken along, the dead were thrown upon horses, not left to be mutilated, and the retreat was begun.

All knew that the firing had been heard at the village, that there would be a thousand braves in the saddle and in pursuit, and a rapid retreat therefore must be made.

So it was begun, just as darkness fell.

With the heavy timber adding to the darkness, all was black, and Little Sure Shot rode to the front to guide the way, no one else knowing the trail.

How he followed the trail through the impenetrable gloom no one knew, but unswervingly he held on, while the Indians, taking advantage of their knowledge of the country, appeared here and there upon the flanks, and ahead, and shot after shot was sent into the gallant band.

Here a soldier was killed, there a scout; next it would be a captive woman or child, and now and then a horse.

But they pushed on, sending volleys whenever they saw a flash, as Little Sure Shot requested the major to do, and finding the chances of death thus made so great, the red marksmen dared not take the risk unless wholly sheltered by rocks.

Slowly down the mountain they went, all feeling that the reinforcements from the village were rapidly gaining.

At last Little Sure Shot sent for Major Harmanas and Ben Willis, the scout lieutenant, to come to the front.

They were soon there.

"We will reach the lowlands in a short while, and then, by a hard ride of four miles, I can carry you to a little hill, where we can make a stand and await help from the fort, for if the force from the village catches us upon the plains they can wipe us out.

"You, Ben, can send two of your men by different trails, one to the fort, the other to look up a force I know

my father has sent, and which will doubtless come by the stage trail, and we can hold out for a day or two at least."

"If our ammunition holds out," was the significant reply of the Mexican major.

"Then let no other shot be fired unless it is to kill."

"No more firing at random, señor."

"We can fill canteens, and water our horses at the stream this side of the hill I speak of, and that must last us until help comes."

"The lowlands are just ahead, where you see the light, and we'll go at a rapid trot from there, to be able to get into position and ready by the time the main force comes up, for they will come with a rush, you may be certain, to wipe us out before help comes."

The plan of the youth was at once decided upon, and two of the scouts, mounted upon the best horses in the outfit, at once started upon their errands, for they knew that once out of the mountain timber they would be surrounded and cut off.

The party then was closed up in close order, and the rapid ride began.

Once they had left the mountain trail, the Indians circled around them, and harrowing shots were fired into the crowded ranks.

But on they pressed, caring for dead and wounded, as it happened to be, and never halting long until the stream was reached.

There the horses were allowed to drink all they cared for, the canteens of soldiers and scouts were filled, and the start was made for the little wooded hill.

"They know our intention, señor, and have gone there ahead of us."

"We will fire a volley and then charge in," said Sure Shot.

The volley did deadly work, and revealed how well the youth had predicted, for there were a number of Indians there before them.

But the fire stampeded them, and a few minutes after the tired band were on the hill and at bay, to fight for their lives.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BUFFALO BILL ON HAND.

Fires were built in the timber, to show the advantages and disadvantages of their position, and a line of scouts was thrown out to keep the Indians at a safe distance.

The captives were placed among the rocks, the horses grouped together and sheltered as much as possible, supper was prepared, and then the men were placed in position to fight it out.

Then the fires were put out, all save the one where the captives were, and in darkness the devoted band awaited the result.

The Indians seemed to have given up the attack, so silent were they, but Little Sure Shot and others, who knew the redskin nature, were well aware that the reinforcements had come up from the village, and their numbers were steadily increasing, while they were waiting until the peep of day to make their grand charge, which they were determined should sweep all before them.

Slowly the night passed away, and half an hour before dawn Little Sure Shot, Major Harmanas, and Ben Willis

went the rounds, waking up the men and preparing for the attack.

Just as they were expecting to see the Indians moving toward the hill, across the open plain, half a mile distant, toward the mountain, there suddenly burst forth one long line of flame, and fully three hundred rifles flashed, and as many bullets were sent into the mass of red humanity then moving against the hill.

The deep roar and red blaze of one, two, three cannon shots followed, and the bursting of shells was heard and seen, followed by wild bugle calls, a roar of many voices in a cheer, a wild warcry, and a hundred gallant troopers went charging into the Indian ranks.

"That warcry came from Buffalo Bill's lips," cried Little Sure Shot.

"Right you are, boy pard."

"He has led the force between the Indians and the mountains," said Ben Willis.

"And, señors, we will go to the attack also," called out the Mexican major.

There was mounting in hot haste, of lanceros and scouts, and out from behind the timbered hill rode fifty lanceros and a dozen scouts.

The dawn had come now, and the charge of the besieged party caught the Indians between two fires, and though there were over a thousand warriors, they fought for a while only and broke in a wild stampede, the cavalry following them in hot pursuit.

At the head of the command from the fort was a gallant officer by the name of Frank Foster, a captain of cavalry.

It was through this officer and Buffalo Bill that Little Sure Shot had his identity discovered and been restored to his parents.

Allied with Buffalo Bill in secret service work to track down certain criminals, Captain Foster had gone to San Gabriel as a sport, had played his cards well, and in the end had been, through Buffalo Bill, Little Sure Shot, and Diablo Dick, the means of saving the settlement from the Comanches.

Returning to his duties at the fort, Captain Frank Foster had watched the career of Little Sure Shot with great interest, and when Nate Nixon had driven into the post, a couple of hours ahead of his time, and delivered Buffalo Bill's message, Colonel Farrar had ordered Foster to take a force to the rescue of the Mexican captives and the support of the daring major and his lanceros.

Frank Foster could get more out of men and horses, it was said, than any other officer, and certainly he was not long in getting three hundred infantry troopers and three guns on the march.

But when they left the stage trail, a couple of hours before midnight, it was found that they had pushed ahead so rapidly it was not known just which way to go from there, and instantly a halt was called until morning.

But just then there was a cheer heard, and into the midst of the command dashed Buffalo Bill.

He had just come from a lone trail, he said, but told no more.

He recalled just where the Mexican scout had said the lanceros were, the trail the Comanches were on, and he at once offered to lead the command to the base of the mountain before dawn.

Captain Frank Foster as promptly accepted, and the

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

march was begun, Buffalo Bill riding to the front with a dozen of his scouts:

To a man like Buffalo Bill all was plain sailing in a country he had scouted over, and he set a good pace, and more, meditated as he went, and the idea came to him that if the lanceros had pressed on in pursuit of the Comanches they would be well up in the mountains by dawn.

So he pushed ahead with several men to reconnoiter, and thus made the discovery of the retreat of the lanceros, the position they had taken up, and that a large force of Indians was in pursuit, and assembling for an attack.

Thus discovering the situation, he went back to Captain Foster, and guided the command to a point between the redskins and the mountains, and the first the Comanches knew of their presence was the deadly volley the infantry poured into their midst.

Thus had the Indians met with another crushing defeat and severe punishment within half a year.

Leaving the cavalry to press the pursuit, Captain Foster, with Buffalo Bill, rode forward to meet Major Hermansas, who was seen at the head of his lanceros, and with Little Sure Shot by his side.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BUFFALO BILL HAS SOMETHING TO TELL.

The meeting between Captain Foster and the Mexican major was a most cordial one, Little Sure Shot introducing them, and making a few words of explanation as to what had been done by the lanceros.

The victory over the Comanches being a complete one, the Mexicans were invited to camp with the Boys in Blue, and the captives were most kindly cared for by the United States officers.

"That young señor is a most remarkable person, señor captain."

"He led the pursuit; was our guide, and won the victory in the mountains, afterward guiding the way through impenetrable darkness to the hill where we stood at bay.

"You should be proud of him, señor captain."

So said Major Hermansas, and Captain Foster replied: "We are, for he is the admiration of all at the post, and this but adds another laurel for his brow."

"I predict a gallant career for him, señor major."

During their conversation Captain Foster's men had been preparing breakfast, and the Mexican lieutenants, Little Sure Shot, and Buffalo Bill were also invited to the mess.

After the meal was dispensed with the Mexicans prepared for their return into their country, with the captives they had retaken, and warm thanks were bestowed upon the Americans, while three rousing cheers were given for Little Sure Shot, others then following for Captain Foster, Buffalo Bill, and the American soldiers, all of which the Boys in Blue returned with a will.

As they moved away Buffalo Bill said:

"Now, Captain Foster, I wish to have a private talk with you, and Little Sure Shot."

"Certainly, Cody, I have felt sure you had something on your mind since you joined us last night."

"Come, Sure Shot, and we'll hear what Buffalo Bill has to say."

Orders had been given for the care of the wounded, and that the command would remain in camp where they were for a couple of days, as though intending a march up into the mountains against the Indians.

So the three friends, for such the officer, the scout, and the boy were, sat down on a serape off to themselves, and Buffalo Bill began his story.

"I left you yesterday, Little Sure Shot, to go on the trail of the mad soldier, whom Nate Nixon told us of, you remember," began the scout.

"Yes, and I was mighty anxious to go with you."

"I saw that, but as it has turned out, we all acted for the best."

"Now, I picked up the trail of the mad soldier's horse, and followed it for miles."

"At last I lost it, where it entered a small stream."

"While trying to find it my horse started, and glancing behind me, I saw, to my amazement, that I was being shadowed myself, and by nothing less than the mad soldier.

"I wheeled and started in pursuit at once."

"But my horse was tired, his as fresh and fleet as a deer, and he dropped me out of sight."

"But I still stuck to his trail, and again lost it."

"While looking for it my horse gave another violent start, and once more I beheld the mad soldier.

"He was shadowing me as before."

"I believe I was a little upset at this, for he had certainly doubled on me most strangely."

"But again I started in pursuit, and as before he kept easily ahead of me."

"Night was near at hand, and, determined to get within range to bring down his horse by a shot, I spurred on hard."

"I urged my horse cruelly, but to no use, and to my sorrow I found, for I had driven the noble animal so hard that he fell with me, to rise no more."

"With very unpleasant feelings, I assure you, I took off my saddle and the rest of my outfit, hung it in a tree, and, with regret at the death of my brave horse, started on foot back to the stage trail."

"I had not gone two hundred yards from where my horse fell, when right in my path I found the splendid black horse of the mad soldier."

"I recognized him at a glance, and he had been hitched there as though his rider had seen my horse fall, and had left the animal there for my use."

"At least so I felt, and I at once unhitched the animal and mounted him."

"As I did so, afar off on a cliff, beyond which the sun was setting, I saw the mad soldier standing and calmly regarding me."

"I started for him, and he at once disappeared."

"But I determined to still pursue him, if I could reach the cliff before darkness set in, and so I started after the mad soldier once more."

CHAPTER XXV.

FOUND AT THE LONE GRAVE.

With deepest attention both Captain Frank Foster and Little Sure Shot had listened to what Buffalo Bill had to tell.

When he paused they made no comment.
They were sure that he had more to tell.

After a minute the scout continued:

"I flanked the cliff, found a trail, and was riding along it when it grew too dark to see.

"But I continued to press on, giving the horse free rein, until suddenly I reined him back with a force that threw him upon his haunches.

"And any other than would have done the same at what I saw.

"In the darkening twilight I beheld, on my right, not ten feet from me, a white cross at the head of a grave, and standing by it a man clad, it seemed, in a fatigue cavalry uniform, yet of white.

"One hand was pointing upward, the other down at the grave.

"I admit I was startled for an instant, but I quickly collected myself and called out:

"Well, pard, got tired of lying in the grave, so you've turned out to prowl as a spook, have you?"

"It was light enough for me to see the white form start, and at once came the answer:

"That is Buffalo Bill's voice.

"Are you Buffalo Bill?"

"I answered promptly, and then came the startling reply:

"You are on the horse of my mad pard.

"I am Diablo Dick."

"I tell you it was a start, a surprise to me; but I was out of the saddle at once and ready to face Diablo Dick, just as his humor inclined, as friend or foe.

"He was the former, for he stepped forward with extended hand and said:

"Buffalo Bill, now I can offer my hand as a square man, and I do.

"I have a story to tell, a mystery to explain; but do you go at once and bring Captain Frank Foster here, and I want the boy, Little Sure Shot, also.

"Much, everything, depends upon them, and I shall await you here; you cannot miss the place, for you can follow the trail from the cliff, the way you came.

"Will you go?"

"I at once promised to do so, mounted the black, after a few more words with Diablo Dick, and then started for the fort.

"I met you, Captain Foster, commanding the force sent to the aid of the lanceros, so I could do nothing but guide you then.

"But now, if you will turn the command over to Captain Nevins, I will guide you to where you will find Diablo Dick, the mad soldier, and a surprise for you both."

"I am ready to start at once, Cody," said Captain Foster.

"I'm with you, pard," was the gay response of the youth.

So Captain Nevins was sent for, the command turned over to him, and the three pards started on the trail to

solve the mystery of Diablo Dick playing ghost, the lone grave marked with a cross, and the mad officer.

It was late in the afternoon when the cliff was reached, and Buffalo Bill led the way into a narrow pass, beyond which ran the trail he had taken the night before.

The black horse, in the lead, went on unfalteringly, and the captain and Sure Shot followed, wondering what it all meant, for the scout had offered no further explanation.

A ride of a mile and the timber was entered, and beyond was seen the white cross, while near it stood the form of Diablo Dick.

There was no doubt as to the man, for Little Sure Shot and Captain Foster recognized him at once, and though he was clad in cavalry fatigue uniform and slouch hat, his suit was white.

"Ho, Dick, old pard, I'm awful glad to see you," said Little Sure Shot springing forward.

The hands of the two clasped warmly, and the man asked, his voice quivering:

"Did you think I was as bad as the worst of 'em, little pard?"

"No, indeed, I never would believe you were an outlaw, Dick."

"That is true, Diablo Dick; he defended you through all," said Captain Foster.

"Yes, all those who knew you best did, Dick.

"But you look as though you were playing ghost," said Little Sure Shot.

"I have been, but for a purpose.

"I have something to tell you, Captain Foster, and that will surprise you all," said Diablo Dick, impressively.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A STRANGE STORY.

In a short while the party of four were seated near the grave, and Diablo Dick said:

"Little pard, I wish you to listen well, for you are interested deeply in my story, and I hope you will try and look into the past as I talk, for I address you, tell you what I have to say, for the captain and Buffalo Bill know of what I tell, as soon all will have come back to them.

"It was nine years ago now that an army paymaster was going through this country with a small escort, and with pack mules carrying a large sum of government gold, sent out of the mines.

"Attacked by Indians, the paymaster was forced to bury it, aided by a lieutenant and a soldier, for he did not wish to trust too many with the secret.

"The treasure lies buried in yonder grave, and is intact, and the body of two dead soldiers, killed by Indians, are on top of it.

"Now, the paymaster and the little force were forced to suffer untold hardships, were captured by Indians, and only escaped after a long while.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"But two only gained the fort, the lieutenant and the soldier.

"It was at last decided to send a force after the gold, guided by the lieutenant, who had been promoted to captain, and the soldier, who had become ordnance sergeant.

"They were accompanied by a scout, eight soldiers, and a little boy of seven, who was allowed to go, as no danger was feared then, his father being in command of the post.

"What happened to them was not really known, as they did not return, and months after bones were found, and it was certain that they were all that remained of the party.

"Several years after an ugly rumor was heard in the fort, to the effect that the sergeant had been false to honor and all, had leagued with outlaws, and, entrapping the party, had allowed all to be massacred, and then divided the booty with his confederates.

"The story was believed, and he was secretly outlawed, and Buffalo Bill had orders to capture or kill him at sight, for it was said he was hovering about the mines.

"To get at the outlaws, if possible, Buffalo Bill and Captain Foster turned ferrets, the one going to San Gabriel as a pretended sport, the other visiting the camps, and then were you, Little Sure Shot, found and returned to your parents.

"This was proof that you had not been massacred with the others.

"But to find the false sergeant was the thing to do, and yet, in Diablo Dick, so changed he was, neither Captain Foster nor Buffalo Bill recognized the one-time sergeant, Leroy Lester, who was said to have been a traitor, while the same charge, I now know, was laid against his commander in the expedition after gold, Captain Louis Leffingwell.

"The truth of all this was that renegades, white men, led redskins to make that attack upon the party.

"Captain Leffingwell was wounded and carried to the Indian village, as was the little boy, yourself, Master Farrar.

"I, the sergeant, was spared by the outlaw leader, for I had once saved his life, and he told me if I would go in with him that he would share the gold with me.

"I promised, for reasons that are plain, and said I would guide him to the hiding place of the gold, for, wounded as he was, Captain Leffingwell did not know, and would not have told to save his life, even.

"The Indian chief, whom Captain Leffingwell had treated most kindly at the fort, took him and the boy to his village and cared for them, while my outlaw friend, the leader, was killed in a row with his men, and I was taken to an outlaw retreat in Mexico, to be tortured until I confessed where the gold was.

"I did not tell, and years after made my escape and, a changed man in appearance. I came to San Gabriel, to

learn that Captain Leffingwell and myself were regarded as traitors, and that he was not believed to be dead, but in hiding.

"My first duty was to hunt down that outlaw band of renegades, whom I heard had found the gold, and so I dared not go to the fort, fearing my story would not be believed.

"The men I killed at San Gabriel were the men who massacred that gold party and brought ruin upon the captain and myself.

"I was on a trail of revenge, and became known as a man-killer—so be it.

"Then I met you, Little Sure Shot, and at last learned who you were, that you were the little boy the Indians had taken with them.

"My next move was to find out the fate of Captain Leffingwell.

"Before doing so came my lone hunt, for I had become mixed in my mind as to where we had hidden that gold, and had discovered that the renegades had not gotten it, after all.

"So I went on regular hunts, to try and find it, and that would be proof of the innocence of Captain Leffingwell and myself.

"But the Indian raid on San Gabriel came, and, fearing that I would be recognized by you, Buffalo Bill, and arrested, I took to flight.

"I went boldly to the Indian village, and there I found that Captain Leffingwell had been there all these years, that his mind was crazed from his wound, that the Indians regarded him with awe, and only lately he had escaped, taking the chief's best horse, a Mexican outfit, and gone no one knew where.

"In time I left the Indian village, and once more began my hunt for that gold.

"One day I came suddenly upon Captain Leffingwell, and he was mounted upon the chief's black horse, dressed in a tattered uniform, and, to my dismay, I saw that he was mad, for he told me that he was in search of dead comrades, and that he also was dead.

"I hit upon a way to gain his confidence, for I pretended I was a spirit also, and thus he took me to his camp, a mile from here, and he it was who led me to this grave, the hiding place of the gold.

"And more, he said that he stood duty here at sunrise each morning, and I must do the same at sunset.

"I did so to humor him, and I whitened a uniform he had with him, for he had brought several in his escape from the Indians, the clothing of the slain soldiers, and I was plotting and planning how to get him to the fort, when, last night, as I took my stand at the grave, to my

joy, you came upon me, Buffalo Bill, I believing it to be the mad captain."

"And where is he now?" asked Captain Foster, in a low tone, he having, with the others, been spellbound by the story told by the unfortunate victim of cruel circumstances.

"He is in our retreat.

"I will guide you all there now, and I believe, if you go about it right, Captain Foster, you may bring the poor captain out of his long dream of madness.

"He is never violent; he has done no harm—in fact, good, for he gave Mr. Cody his horse when he saw his fall with him, and then ran off to hide.

"He talks rationally at times, but then all becomes a blank again to him, and he goes off to search for his dead comrades, muster them, find the gold, and carry it in safety to the fort.

"Come, we will go to the camp," and Sergeant Leroy Lester led the way to the retreat of the mad soldier, a small cabin he had built in a tiny valley.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

The retreat was found, the sergeant going in first, and after a long talk with the mad soldier, he called in Little Sure Shot.

Then half an hour passed away, Buffalo Bill and Frank Foster listening to the conversation, now low, now excited.

Then out came the sergeant, and he beckoned to Captain Foster.

The officer entered the little cabin, and soon after Buffalo Bill heard the startling words:

"Great God! am I no longer dreaming?

"Have I at last awakened from a long sleep of madness?"

"Thank Heaven I believe now I understand it all, how this wound in my head has kept my brain in thrall for long years.

"Yes, I see it all now.

"Sergeant Lester, did you say that the scout Buffalo Bill was also with you?"

"Yes, sir," and Sergeant Lester called for Buffalo Bill.

Instantly the captain recognized him, and as he grasped his hand said:

"I am glad to see you, Cody, glad indeed.

"I see all now as it is, and that I have been mad for

long years, for this boy has almost grown to manhood since we went on the search for that gold.

"At last, at last, all is clear as noonday, and my mind looks back into the past as upon a frightful dream."

It was a pleasant party that camped that night in the little cabin, and bright and early the next morning Buffalo Bill started for the stage trail to head off the returning force under Captain Nevins.

They came along at noon, and the captain at once sent an ambulance and squad of cavalry with the scout to the retreat of the mad captain.

The next day the grave was opened, the two bodies removed, and beneath was found the long-hidden gold.

Safely the gold was taken to the fort, and the welcome Captain Leffingwell and Sergeant Lester met with gladdened their hearts.

As for the outlaws who had held up Nate Nixon, Buffalo Bill had spotted them, as has been seen, and he and Little Sure Shot captured Nat Farley and the others, one of whom, the leader, had pretended to be Diablo Dick.

Retiring from the army, Colonel Farrar went East, and after half a year spent in study, Sure Shot, the buckskin brave, received an appointment as cadet at West Point.

That was the beginning of a new career; for, going there, he graduated with honor, in due time, and to-day is known as one of the most gallant officers and efficient masters of the redskins in the army. As such master, and as a careful watcher of the Indian reservations, Buffalo Bill has been his guide; and on many a perilous trail, in pursuit of the "hostiles," as well as the renegades and outlaws who even yet infest portions of the wilderness, the two "hearts of oak" have made many an exciting chapter in the true romance of the Wild West.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 100, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Leap for Life; or, the White Death of Beaver Wash." The next number will be a centennial number—the hundredth number of the Buffalo Bill Weekly.

We are going to celebrate our centennial by issuing one of the finest, wildest and most exciting stories ever printed. The White Death was a mysterious monster in the form of a woman that haunted a certain valley in the Northwest. Everybody who looked upon it for the third time was doomed to die.

Buffalo Bill solved the mystery and put an end to the White Death. How he did it will be told in next week's issue.

CURIOS. DREAMS



Rather late in the year for snow, isn't it?

We have a snowstorm here though—a good sized one, too.

It's a peculiar snowstorm though—a snowstorm of letters sent in by those boys who entered this contest last week.

The editors will read every one of them—the more the merrier.

Don't you want to add your flakes to this snowstorm, and stand a chance of winning a prize.

List of prizes on page 31.

Returned from the Dead.

(By John Ash, West Lynn, Mass.)

A few years ago a friend and I took part in a horrible parade held in this city on the Fourth of July. My friend wore an old battered silk hat, an old rusty coat, and a long, trailing brown skirt, using an old gray umbrella as a cane. He did look funny.

A short time after this, this same friend met a most tragic end.

A few nights ago I dreamed I was working at my bench in the shop when I heard a band playing in the street below. I rushed to the window and saw a parade coming up the street. As the front of the parade reached the window it stopped, and there in the front, leading the parade, I recognized my dead friend, whirling the old umbrella and dressed in the identical costume. He looked up and called to me, but it was the landlady calling me to get up and go to work.

Captured by Jesse James.

(By Raynor L. Saxe, Willoughby, Ohio.)

For the past two months I have been reading a good deal about Jesse James and his band of outlaws, and a few nights ago I had a dream about being captured by Jesse James and his outlaws.

There is a mountain about ten miles from here called Little Mountain. I dreamed that two other boys and myself went there on a coon hunt. We got to the foot of the mountain and then sat down and took a little rest. Then we started to hunt up the mountain. We got up about a mile, when one of the boys looked back and saw a fire.

He said: "Look, boys, I wonder what that fire is back there." The rest of us looked back, and we made up our minds that it must be some one camping out. We thought we would go back and see who it was. We got about two hundred feet from the fire and stopped and looked. We saw a party of about twenty men; but, to our great surprise, there were three or four men bound to trees. Then we thought the best thing for us to do would be to get away as soon as we could. So we turned and started to run, but a voice called "Halt!" We kept on running. Crack! crack! went two revolvers, and two of the boys went down. So I thought I had better stand still. Two of the men came and got me and took me over by the rest. They then bound me to a tree near where the other three were bound, and then they went back to finish their supper. I did not know who the outlaws were. I asked one of the men who was bound near me, in a low whisper, who the outlaws were, and he told me that it was Jesse James and his band.

I then thought for sure that my life had come to an end. After the outlaws had finished their supper, the one who seemed to be Jesse James, said: "Well, boys, now we will take these four men to the nearest good-sized tree and hang them." Then four of the outlaws came and unbound us. Then they started out to look for a tree, as it was all brush around us. They had taken us but a little way before we came to a deep cliff. There was a stream of water at the foot, for we could hear the water roaring over the rocks below. Jesse James halted at the top of the cliff. He looked down and the moon shone on the water below. It looked to be about one or two hundred feet down. Jesse James then turned around to the rest of the outlaws, and said: "Well, boys, I don't think there is any need of looking any farther for a tree. Here is a good place, take the four bound men and stand them in a

row at the edge of the cliff. I will say 'One! two! three! Go!' and when I saw 'Go!' push them off the cliff, and they will be dashed to death on the rocks below." The men did so, and Jesse James said: "One! two! three! Go!" The men gave the four of us a push off the cliff, and we went down, down, down, and just as we were about to strike on the rocks below, I fell out of my bed on the floor and awoke, and was very glad to find it only a dream.

One Night on the Mountains.

(By George Schertel, Union Hill, N. J.)

In the year 1901, in the merry month of June, I and my friend were traveling through the country to see some part of the world. When we reached somewhere in Pennsylvania we were put off the train, as we were roughing it. When night came we were looking for a safe place to sleep, and soon discovered a large mountain, so we started to climb until we found a suitable place. We were very tired, so were soon in slumber.

That night I had a fearful dream. I thought I was climbing the side of a lofty mountain, and that my friend was with me. It seemed as though we had been climbing for hours and would never reach the top.

Suddenly there came a deep rumbling sound, and the mountain began to shake and tremble. I thought at first it was an earthquake. Then I came to the conclusion that the mountain must be a volcano. I started to run down in terror, when all at once the ground seemed to give way beneath me with a roar that was simply terrific, and I fell with it, with nothing before me but a deep black abyss. Horror seized me now. I was falling, falling; nothing could save me. I felt Charlie seize me by the leg. "Hold on, for God's sake!" I heard a voice cry. "Keep your shirt on, George, and I'll do my best to save you yet!" I was awake now. To my unspeakable horror, I found myself hanging, head downward, halfway over the cliff, from which a dense cloud was rising. It was broad daylight, and Charlie was behind, holding me by the leg. This alone prevented me from dashing downward to my doom.

"I've got you, old pal! Don't give in! Pull yourself together! Now try!" It was a moment of life or death. Either of these it might prove, but it was not a moment for delay. "What shall I do?" I asked. "Keep perfectly quiet and don't move about so. I'm going to try to draw you up." I felt myself rising slowly. The rough projections of rock caught in my coat and tore it to ribbons. "Saved!" I cried. "Saved! God bless you!" What followed I will not mention.

A Box of Diamonds.

(By Harry Russell, Colorado City, Col.)

I dreamed last night that there was going to be a box of diamonds thrown into the river, so I and my partner got a raft and rowed to the middle of the river. We stopped and looked and there we could see a lot of Mexicans walking around. The water was very clear. Just then some one came over on a boat with a box. We wondered what was going to be done. I went and asked

them. They said they were going to throw diamonds away. They threw a box down and it landed right in front of a Mexican. My partner got excited and jumped down. I saw him light. He motioned for me to come and I did. Just as I lit I woke up and found myself on the floor.

A Christmas Night's Dream.

(By A. Fred, Hancock, Mich.)

Christmas night. The candy, nuts, etc., were playing football in my stomach. I turned and twisted in bed like a water-logged vessel. Try as I would, I couldn't find a place to fit my poor overloaded body. I heard the tower clock at the City Hall as it struck eleven, then twelve, then one. Whether it struck two or three that morning I don't know. I listened patiently to hear it again, but it seemed to me that it must have stopped. So I gave up all hopes in that direction and watched for the first gleam of morning. But it did not appear, so I resigned myself to fate, and—fell asleep. I didn't fall far. I landed in a Chinese temple. Right before me I saw a gigantic idol. It was about twenty feet tall and built in proportion. The head was made of some sort of chalk, the eyes must have been diamonds, for they flashed and sparkled in the light.

Back of the idol was an alcove. I don't know how far it extended, but what I saw was enough to convince me that it was one of the richest places in the world. Birds, beasts and men were carved in gold, and hung on the walls. Yes, I was in the highest place of pagan worship, but I had very little time to speculate on its beauties, for, no sooner did I begin to realize where I was, when in rushed two "chinks." They nabbed me in no time, and after binding and gagging me, they led me to a cell in the ground. It was like a huge bottle with the neck up. The walls were made of a smooth black marble. The distance from the bottom to the cork—or ground—was about fifteen feet. The floor was smooth and about nine feet in diameter.

It didn't take them two minutes to cut my bonds and put me in that hole. Well, ten or fifteen minutes passed before they appeared, and during that time I had thought of hundreds of different tortures, for I was very eager to know which one I was to receive. By and by the two guards appeared. They carried a long box, which they lowered by means of a rope into the cell. Then, by pulling another rope, the box collapsed and—holy Moses!—out of that box came thousands of rats. You can imagine how angry they were at being dumped so rudely on the cold stone floor. They were as mad as hornets and began to look for something to wreak their vengeance on. So overjoyed were they at making my acquaintance that they jumped and yelled and covered me with their left-handed kisses. I danced and kicked with might and main and knocked the vermin in every direction.

Glancing up, I saw the devilish face of a Chinaman grinning at me from the top of the opening. Serious as was my position, I chuckled as an idea entered my head. Stooping quickly, I caught a big gray rat and hurled it upward at that ugly yellow mug. My lively torpedo struck dead center and Mr. Chinaman disappeared. He soon came back, however, with a big stone in his hand.

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

His face no longer showed that triumphant grin. He looked like the demon he really was, and lifting the stone, he threw it at me. I tried to dodge, but it caught me on the back of my head and sent me to my knees. I looked up again, but the hole seemed far away. It was winking and dazzled me. Just then I heard the ding dong of the City Hall clock. I woke up and found myself on my hands and knees in bed staring through the window at the afternoon sun. It was 2.10 P. M. when I came down for breakfast.

A Dream of the Midnight Murder.

(By Chester Detrich, Chicago, Ill.)

The dream I am about to tell you is of a Wednesday night murder and hold up. It was just twelve-thirty o'clock when I was driving in the plains of Missouri and was about through with my journey and was riding comfortably when suddenly a shot was heard and it went whizzing by my head. Then another and a severe pain came across me, and I put my hand to my breast and blood was flowing rapidly. Suddenly a man came in back of me and knocked me on the head with a billy, which knocked me senseless on the ground, and twelve men held revolvers while one searched me.

Then some of my friends from the fencing club came on their horses down the path I was going, with their swords and revolvers, and as they saw me lying on the ground, they knew me and a bloody fight followed. There were ten in number of these fencing men and each had two swords and gave ten of the hold-up men a sword to fight with. The other two had escaped, but while doing so, one of my friends shot and killed them, and then the duel came off. The ten hold-up men were killed and only one of the fencing-club men was injured.

A Warning to Other Boys.

(By Joseph F. Quirk, St. Louis, Mo.)

I had just come home from a party at one of my boy friend's house, and as I was very tired went straight to bed. I dreamed that I had been at a dance that evening, and was dancing with all the young ladies, when I happened to see a beautiful young girl sitting over in one part of the room, all by herself. So I thought it would be no more than right for me to go and ask her to have the next dance with me.

Well, I did, and as she answered yes, of course I danced with her. Well, when that dance was over I led her to a seat, and after thanking her for the honor she gave me, I walked off. I had danced two or three other dances, when I noticed this same girl sitting by herself again, so I went to her and asked her if I could not have the next dance with her, and she said yes again, so I had that dance with her.

Well, that happened three or four times, when finally the last dance was starting up, and I saw her again sitting alone. I went and asked her if I could have the last dance with her, and she said yes. We danced it, and of course it was my place to see her home, so I said to her: "May I see you home?" She hesitated a minute and then said

that I could. "Although," she said, "my carriage is right outside here." So we got in and rode about six or seven blocks, when we stopped in front of an elegant mansion. The footman alighted and helped us out. The young lady then asked me if I would not come in and have lunch with her, as she said she had been used to eating when she came home from a dance. I was about to refuse, but she insisted on me coming in, and although I did not find out her name the whole time I was with her, I went in and she took me right into the dining-room, and I saw that the table was set for two.

I was wondering to myself if I was intruding on anybody else, when the young lady asked me to excuse her for a minute, and I, of course, said: "Why certainly." While she was gone I looked around the place, and it certainly was the most beautiful place I was ever in. After looking at everything that was worth looking at, I began to think my lady friend was never coming back, and so I waited and waited until I finally got tired. I got up and got my hat and coat and was just about to go out, when I heard somebody put a key in the door. I was a little frightened when the door was opened and there stood a man. He asked me what I was doing there at that time of the night. I tried to explain to him that I had just seen his daughter home from dancing school, and with that he contradicted me, and said it was not his daughter, as the only daughter he had was crazy and in an asylum. I told him I knew better. It must have been his daughter, and he said it was not; it must have been one of his servants. I told him it was not. Then I looked up and there, coming down the steps, was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen, all robed in white, with her hair hanging down her back. I turned to the man and said: "Why, there is the girl I brought home."

Then I woke up and found that my mother had been calling me for at least five minutes, and finding she could not wake me, had sprinkled me with a cupful of water in my face. I can assure you it brought me to my senses pretty quick.

A Runaway Man.

(By Martin McMurtry, St. Louis, Mo.)

One night, after riding around all day with a friend of mine, and feeling very tired, I went to bed about eight o'clock. I dreamed that my friend and I were driving on a high grade with very steep sides and a car track in the center. The horse, which was afraid of cars, took fright at a passing car and ran toward the side of the grade, which was fifty feet deep, and jumped off; but, strange to say, we were not hurt. The horse came down on his feet and the wagon right side up. I thought everything was all right, and was about to speak to my friend, when he jumped from the wagon and started to run across the lot, yelling at the top of his voice. He ran to the center of the lot, and picked up an old telegraph pole which was lying there and started to swing it around, knocking over the crowd which had gathered about, and then threw away the pole and started off on a run toward a row of bluffs on the east side of the city, about a mile away. I started after him with the horse and wagon, but the faster the horse went the faster he would go, until he got to the hills. He started up, so I got out and started to follow

him on foot, the hill being so steep the horse could not climb it. He ran on for about a quarter of a mile, when he came to a deep canyon, which cut through the bluffs. He stopped on the side and started to look down. I was afraid he was going to jump, so I called to him. He turned around and looked at me, and then started toward some trees which grew near. He picked up a dead limb, which was lying on the ground.

By this time I was up pretty near the canyon. He happened to see me and started toward me with the limb, and shouted that he was going to kill me. I could tell now that his mind was affected. I did not know what to do. He was so close I could not turn around and run back, so my only chance was in jumping the canyon. It was about fifteen feet wide, but I did not stop to think about that, so I ran to the side and made a big jump. For a while I thought I would get across all right, for my feet hit on the other side, but the earth gave away beneath me. I started to fall and slide down the steep sides. I thought I never would stop falling, and all the time I could hear my friend up above laughing, but at last I came to a stop and then I woke up. I was lying at the bottom of the steps, and my brother was up at the top laughing at me.

The Circus.

(By Eldridge Buffum, Holyoke, Mass.)

One night, after I had been reading a paper, I had a dream. I thought I went to a circus, and just as I got in the big tent I heard the cry, "The lion is loose!" I looked and saw the lion grab a little girl and kill her. Then the beast saw me and started for me. I ran and could hear it close behind me. Just then I got caught in a rope and fell.

I awoke to find myself on the floor. I was very glad it was only a dream.

A Midnight Hold Up.

(By William F. Perdue, Alexandria, Ind.)

I had worked hard all day, and when night came had the headache. Now, whenever I have the headache I always have a strange dream, and this time was not an exception. Two robbers knocked at the door, and not knowing who they were, I got up out of my chair to open the door. The moment I had opened the door, I saw two men with black masks on their faces standing before me. I also saw two revolvers aimed at my head.

"Hands up!" said one, gruffly.

I wasn't slow about obeying.

"We want your money."

I had just drawn ten thousand dollars out of the bank that day to use, and I knew if I gave it up I would be a poor man. So I told a lie.

"I haven't any money," I said.

"We know better than that, for we saw you draw a large sum out of the bank."

"I haven't any money in the house," I protested.

"I know you have, and you had better hand it out quickly," said the one who was doing the talking.

Still I made no move indicating that I was going to hand any money out.

"We'll shoot if you don't hand it over."

Still no move from me. Seeing that I did not intend to obey, one of the robbers pulled the trigger three times in rapid succession. Two bullets entered just below the heart, while the other flew wide of the mark. I experienced an awful sensation. I knew death was fast approaching and I hated to die, but my time had come. But I determined to die game, and I reached out to trip the robber while I could, and I got hold of the bedpost. I found myself lying on the floor with the bedclothes on top of me.

A Dream of a Spirit.

(By Wiley McTaggart, East Pittsburg, Pa.)

One even, after eating a very late lunch, I went to bed very tired. It wasn't long before I was dreaming of all kinds of things. But there was one dream that I remembered more distinctly than the rest. It was this:

It seemed that I was working near a graveyard and all at once I heard people talking and shouting. I looked up and saw a large crowd in the graveyard. Thinking it was a funeral; I didn't think any more about it until one of my chums came along and wanted me to go with him to see what was the matter. So I let my work go and went with him. As we neared the place I asked a man who was standing nearby what was the matter. He pointed his fingers in the direction of the crowd and said, "Look!" and with that he fell back like one dead. I looked where he had pointed and saw a sight of horror.

As I looked, the hearse that contained the corpse seemed to be falling to pieces, the top and sides seemed to float away in the air, and out of the coffin there seemed to arise two heads. Their faces looked as white as wax. As I looked again I saw in these faces the features of two of my dearest friends, one of whom had been dead a good while, and the other I had seen a few weeks before, well and strong. I wanted to cry out, but speech failed me. All at once my chum gave a groan and fell down at my feet.

I woke up then and heard a train whistling, and I think that was what woke me up. I was so scared I couldn't go to sleep for a good while afterward. This is a true dream.

A Frightful Dream.

(By John B. Sanborn, Hartford, Conn.)

In my dream I found myself in Nevada, in a house or building which seemed to me to be like a hotel.

In a conversation, which opened there, we agreed to make up a party to visit the silver mines and examine the silver ore. We proceeded there upon horseback. Upon arriving at the mines I was the first person to dismount. There was what appeared to me like a lot of wood scattered around in circles or heaps. I sprang lightly down upon one of these circles or heaps, which I thought were heaps of wood, and then I found these heaps or piles were soft and yielding substances. The discovery caused a shock to me, and I bounded up only to fall back or to drop down upon other heaps, for many successive times.

The last time I came down I struck or fell upon a

THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

beautiful mound, and it was at the mouth of a silver mine, and those heaps which I thought were piles of wood were instead collections of dead snakes, mingled together where they had been killed by some of the miners. On entering the mine through the tunnel, we seemed to walk quite a distance.

First we saw a small amount of silver shining around us, and as we advanced farther, the glow and sparkle of the silver increased, until the sight was dazzling and most beautiful to behold. We walked on and on, and suddenly, as we turned in the windings of our walk, we beheld a network of the silver, shaped or hung like a network of frosted silver, resembling a barricade or impediment, on our onward path.

We were amazed and surprised at seeing so suddenly such an unexpected sight, and we were about to place our hands upon the network, when, from some dark and hidden nook or hiding place, a most unnatural being sprang into view, and advancing toward us, exclaimed: "Stand back! and place not your hands upon my treasure, for it all belongs to me. Return to the world above, or else, under my guidance, go to where more beautiful sights await you."

Going on after the strange being, we came upon inestimable quantities of sparkling, glowing and dazzling heaps of pure virgin silver, more beautiful and costly than that which we first saw.

Suddenly our guide exclaimed: "Behold what is before you!" and looking, we saw an immense receptacle or enclosure about two feet deep. "There," said our guide, "are the sentinels, or protectors, of my silver riches."

I, as spokesman for our party, said: "That accounts for many snakes at the entrance of the tunnel."

The guide then exclaimed: "Depart instantly from this place and seek the right tunnel for silver ore, for my friends here, the snakes, will defend myself and riches to the bitter end."

We waited no longer, but fled as our guide began to take on a dangerous aspect. And when I awoke I found my pet dog and mother cat and five kittens clustered together on the outside of the bedclothes, holding me down, and I was struggling to free myself.

A Dream of Africa.

(By James Woods, Decatur, Mich.)

One evening I was reading a story about Africa and sat up quite late to finish it, and when I got through I went to bed. Being tired and sleepy from reading so much I went to sleep and dreamed that I was in some village in Africa with another white man. He and I started to another village, about twenty-five miles away, with about five natives. Both of us were quite heavily armed. We had to cross a plain, go through a small jungle, and climb some low ranges of mountains. We started in broad daylight one morning and traveled all the forenoon, and ate dinner at the edge of the jungle. In the afternoon we started into the jungle, and I could hear the monkeys chatter at a distance, while at other times the lonely squeak of a tree reached my ears. I was all the time expecting some large beast would spring out of some thicket as we passed.

We traveled all the afternoon in this way, now and then being interrupted by the curious cries of apes. About sundown found us coming out of the jungle and climbing up the slope of the mountain range. Here my dream changed.

I dreamed I was on another mountain slope opposite my friends. My only hope was to get back to the other slope, which my friends were climbing. It was getting dark and I could just make out the outline of my friends as they were climbing the slope. I called, but they did not hear me. So I ran with all my speed in their direction. I ran down the slope and into a little valley, and soon came to the bank of a small stream. I did not have time to think, but buckled my rifle to my belt and plunged in. I swam to the other side, climbed out, and when I got on my feet I looked for my friends, but they had passed out of my sight over a little ridge. I ran with all my might, calling as I went, but all of a sudden I stopped my calling, for right in front of me, behind a little bush, was a huge male lion. I looked at my rifle, but it was useless, and I took to my heels and ran up a hill, knocking my feet against the rocks. The lion came roaring after me, and all at once I came to a precipice. I was just getting ready to jump, when the lion made a spring and grabbed me, and both I and the lion went over the precipice. I gave a scream and awoke, only to find myself all covered with perspiration. I was lying crossways on the bed and my brother was lying across me, and when I thought the lion struck me was when I hit my head on the bedpost, for there was a bump on my head. I straightened myself around in bed and soon dropped off to sleep.

A Bear Hunt.

(By Garland Connell, Prescott, Arizona.)

One day, after I had been on a long hunt, I came home very tired. I went to bed about eight o'clock, which is very early for me, and had a very queer dream. I dreamed that another fellow and I were out hunting bears. My friend said, pointing to the ground: "There is a large bear track." I said: "Let's follow it and maybe we can get a shot at it."

We went about two miles, when we saw a large bear on a little knoll or ridge. My friend took first shot, but missed. I tried to shoot him, but my gun snapped and the bear gave a loud roar and started for us. My friend and I started in opposite directions, but the bear took after me. When I saw he was after me, my legs wouldn't move, and the bear gave me a terrible slap on the side of the head, knocking me about ten feet.

I awoke with a start, to find myself lying on the floor with my nose skinned. I was almost scared to death when I went back to bed.

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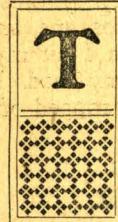
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